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Joint Venture

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e Fonts: **Zuzana Licko** | Sales, distribution, and
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Winter 1996

Inside front and inside back covers:
Nothing Special and *Something Special*
Framed illustrations by Marc Nagtzaam
shown at the Emigre Studio

Joint Venture:

Writers, Designers, and the New Language of Collaboration

by Daniel X. O'Neil

This essay lays the rationale behind a new approach to the writer/designer relationship based on the ownership of intellectual property. This approach begins with a change in the way we describe dual artistic product and advocates a change in the structure of shared ownership and credit. It proposes a linguistic change to reflect a switch in emphasis from labor to ownership. It lifts the writer and designer, up until now cogs in the wheels of big publishing, out of the "work for hire" category (the ghetto of international intellectual property law) and into the center of a publishing operation, giving them artistic and financial control.

When **collaborate** was coined, it was the simple expression of co-labor. During World War II, however, the word was used to describe what the French did with the Germans when Hitler's tanks rolled underneath the Arc de Triomphe. The word has since smacked of cooperation with the enemy. The image of collaboration is the picture of some grubby little clerk in the basement of the Pentagon making copies of civil defense documents to sell to Soviets. Certainly not a stable, honorable, enterprise is collaboration. Yet for years artists have presented the fruit of their labor underneath this stained banner. The focus of collaboration on "labor" is also a convenient way to deny artists ownership of their work and the right to exploit it. Factory workers are paid by the shift. The products of their work belong to the owner of the factory, who has all the rights to it. Collaboration is a fuzzy activity conducted on the fringes of society. There is a strong notion that artists ought to be happy to be invited to the collaboration for the love and joy of creation. Then they should go away. This wastes time and leads to marginalization and poverty for the collaborators. "Collaborate" also focuses on a tightly held, inward relationship with no regard for the rest of the world.

"Joint venture" is a forward-looking thing, facing outward to the rest of the world, a phrase of utility when engaging in commerce. It defines the relationship of joint venturers to each other, as well as to all other individuals and entities, by statute and case law. "Joint" as a word has a long history of being about property, about the holding together of things, and the action behind ownership. The other foot of joint is the venture, the stepping into the world and facing the possibilities and inevitabilities of life as a corporate structure. It involves acting together and benefiting jointly from the expertise and interests of others, not dabbling in the other's expertise and interests, because that is not an effective or profitable use of corporate resources. It is better to let each do their work. It also has the connotation of chance and danger, and what is more American than the confident roll of the dice? It takes guts to venture, and none to collaborate with an occupying army.

"Joint venture" provides the stable, legally recognized structure for the relationship among two or more people or entities engaged in interrelated industries joined for an express purpose. It is a 30-year old term rooted in American Business Language, which is the tongue of commerce all over the world. Instead of couching the fruit of dual product as the conspiratorial whispers of collaborators, joint venture is an up-front, widely accepted undertaking. The entity created when a writer and designer form a joint venture to create printed matter is called "publisher." The startling realization is that all one needs to be a publisher is a writer, a designer, and a willingness to spend all your money on printing.

Onward and Forward to the Formulation of Joint Ventures!

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Onward and Forward to the Formulation of Joint Ventures!

Hello!

This issue is about collaboration, writing, intellectual property, entrepreneurialism, poetry, authorship, self-publishing, reading and everything else that design is made of, but this time we look at it from the perspective of a group of artists that includes two writers, one graphic designer and one fine artist. The thread that runs through this issue, which brought these four people together in it, is their drive to publish. While the publishing companies of the world continue to merge and slowly but surely seize control of all possible means of production and distribution, it never ceases to amaze me how certain individuals continue to fly in the face of these corporate giants. Some through sheer naivete, others with a keen sense of what they're up against, but all driven by one of the most basic human needs: to create new things, and then to share those creations with others.

When the photographer Brassai described the writing of Henry Miller as "a cry for help from a humanity being crushed by civilization," I couldn't help but think how perfectly this phrase articulated the role of most artists and certainly the artists featured in this issue. Their never-ending curiosity about the unexplored facets of life, the consideration they show to others and their sincerity of approach is what made working on this issue an inspirational and educational experience for me. I hope you'll be similarly enlightened. » Rudy VanderLans «



JUGGERNAUT



EDITIONS ESTELLE
marc nagtzaam

Daniel X. O'Neil's Juggernaut logo designed by Jonny Stepping

Stephen Farrell's logo for his studio SLIP—

One of many identities used for the publishing ventures of Marc Nagtzaam

upon a time

TOONS

in a tense that marked the reader's comfortable distance from it, a calamity befell the good people of X.

It was as if the once-in-a-googol chance of all the iambs, throbs, archythic rhythms and other contradictions of the heart had, according to the laws of probability, hit a single beat in unison THAT IS TO SAY, THE PRESENT HAD COME TO PASS and when, as predicted by the Second Law of Thermodynamics, the upswing put them all out of synch again, they felt as one the shattering of Time into its monumental, cosmic, historic, romantic and personal versions.

Once upon a time

if only she could find a way to do it

THROUGH TWICE TOLD TALES Shakespeare by way of Hawthorne that die due to a gap between beginning and end when what was wanted was a MÖBIUS TWIST, A UNION OF TIME AND DESIRE EVEN IF IT INCLUDED THE TEETH OF TIME AS SNAKE DEVOURING ITS OWN TALE AND SHE LONGED FOR A WAY TO APPROXIMATE THE SENSE OF A WHOLE THAT WAS MUCH EASIER TO FAKE IN ART THAN IN LIFE, A TRANSFORMATION OF NARRATIVE REPETITION AS DEATH INTO REPETITION OF NARRATIVE AS PERPETUAL — **O!** she cried,

A HERE AND NOW OF TOSSING AND TURNING

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The Vogue model — who died in her heart and her body before, going to bed.

AT FIRST I WAS SUSPICIOUS OF THE RICHNESS AND ILLUSORY DEPTH OF STEPHEN FARRELL'S GRAPHIC DESIGN. THE MOVES WERE TOO SMOOTH, FACILE, EVEN. A CHICAGO-BASED GRAPHIC DESIGNER, STEPHEN IS A STRONG PROPONENT OF VISUAL/VERBAL EXPERIMENTATION AND POETICS IN GRAPHIC DESIGN. NONETHELESS, WHEN I RECEIVED HIS SUBMISSION TO THE MOUTHPIECE PROJECT, I SET HIS PACKAGE ASIDE, PREFERRING AT THE TIME DISCORD AND THE UNFAMILIAR. BUT I COULDN'T GET STEPHEN'S DESIGN FOR BROOKE BERGAN'S REVIEW OF THE GREGG BENDIAN PROJECT OUT OF MY MIND. A SLINKY AND JAZZ, IT WAS JUST SO PERFECT. SO I SUBMITTED TO THE SEDUCTION, TO THE VISCERAL PLAY WITH LANGUAGE, STRUCTURE AND RHYTHM THAT RESULTED FROM HIS ATTENTIVENESS TO THE WRITTEN AND SPOKEN WORD. IT IS THIS SENSITIVITY THAT ENABLES STEPHEN TO COLLABORATE WITH TWO VERY DIFFERENT WRITERS WHOSE ONLY COMMONALITY IS A BELIEF IN THE COMMUNICATIVE CAPACITY OF FORM. STEPHEN'S "JOINT VENTURES" WITH POET/PERFORMANCE ARTIST/INDEPENDENT PUBLISHING ENTREPRENEUR DANIEL X. O'NEIL FREQUENTLY SERVE THE INTERESTS OF BOTH PARTIES: DAN'S POETRY, WHICH HE SELF-PUBLISHES THROUGH JUGGERNAUT, AND STEPHEN'S TYPEFACES, WHICH ARE DISTRIBUTED THROUGH [T-26]. ON THE OTHER END OF THE SPECTRUM, STEPHEN'S PROJECTS WITH (META-)FICTION WRITER STEVE TOMASULA FOR THE LITERARY JOURNAL *Private Arts* ARE STRICTLY A LABOR OF (LANGUAGE) LOVE.

» Anne Burdick «

An interview with Stephen Farrell

Anne Burdick: Could you tell me a little about your collaborative relationships with Daniel X. O'Neil and Steve Tomasula?

Stephen Farrell: I first met Dan while I was designing a promo book for [T-26] and we decided to display the typefaces using Dan's poetry. Dan writes more for the spoken word; he's a performer first and a poet second. A lot of his work deals with local issues, local politics and national news, snippets that he gets. Our collaborations have mainly focused on verse essays or I've taken some of his poetry that's been published in his books or that he's brought over on legal pads or things that he's faxed. Our collaborations are fairly spontaneous and erratic – if a poem grabs me, I'll work with it even if it's been published in another form by another artist. That's the interesting thing about these joint

ventures. There is no definitive form, not even a definitive medium. A single poem like *Injured Child Flown to London* may unfold as a performance piece, a limited edition print, a page in a book and a piece of music. One of his poems was first published on his face. The cover of our booklet, *Boilerplate*, was printed on shooting range targets. In some cases, I've used his pieces to promote my fonts. As I'm finishing up a font, he might pass me a poem that seems to speak in that font.

The work with Dan led to me to *Private Arts*. One of my students was working with Steve Tomasula. *Private Arts* needed somebody to design the journal and work with some of the writers. I had a meeting with Steve [Tomasula] and we argued the first time we got together. (Laughs) It was kind of a strange meeting. I showed him some of the

things that Dan and I had done. But *Private Arts* was a much larger organization, with a board of directors. They were just getting their feet wet with the idea of consciously merging poetry and design. And so they wanted to take it slow. But that relationship has blossomed. And I'll tell you, Steve has donned the mask and cape many times in our defense.

A: With the board of *Private Arts*?

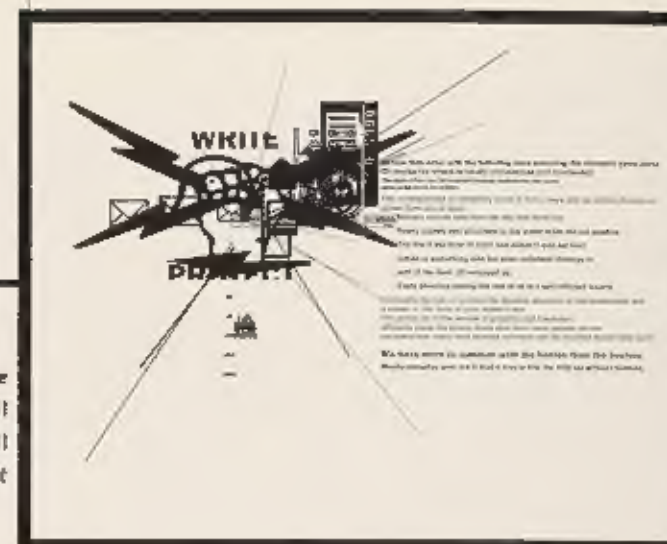
S: Right, with the board, with the president. They ended up sending out sheets to all of the writers who were going to be in the journal. Basically, they had them rank from one to five how much they would allow their pieces to be designed. Some of the writers circled one; they vehemently wanted their work to be very standard, very traditional. Other poets latched onto the idea. They were fives. (Laughs) They

Indelible Victorian

Typeface design and layout by Stephen Farrell

Text by Daniel O'Neil

First published in the [T-26] type catalog



Page spread from *Boilerplate*

Text by Daniel X. O'Neil

Design by Stephen Farrell

Published by Juggernaut

...overwrite as many
poems as we could
before our languages became strange again.

excerpt from *Boilerplate*, Daniel X. O'Neil

Indelible Victorian

wanted us to really experiment with the union of image and text. It was nice because I first worked with the editors, Brook Bergan, Dale Heiniger and Steve Tomasula. We used these pieces as standards to show the others: this is what's possible.

Some of the writers were already working with artists, so they had a very definite form that they wanted to attach to their work. But there were a lot of writers who were very suspicious and very protective of their work. An iconoclastic notion of authorship kept coming in, a fear of the loss that might come from a speaking surface. I think a lot of the writers see it as an infringement, a trespassing – if it's not done well, that is.

A: In the letter that you and Steve Tomasula sent me, you wrote, "It is no more possible to have form without content and content without form. Even the most designerless prose, the justified block of type, is a design instilled with value (in this case, standardization and simulated transparency)." It's the whole simulated transparency aspect of it that these writers believe in.

S: Right. We're familiar with the standardized block of copy and we are programmed to look through its design. I think that's what the writers want in a lot of cases. I think they see their words as the things packed with...

A: All the meaning?

S: Yeah.

A: You guys use content and form, what I would consider an artificial breakdown. As soon as you switch the word "content" to "meaning," it becomes a much different thing. Content is understood as the intention, as coming from the source. Whereas meaning is now increasingly understood as occurring at the site of the reader. The meaning is different from the form; the form is the actual thing itself. The meaning is, I guess, what the whole of it says.

S: I think that there is a common notion that content is the writing and form is the design and meaning is the reader. But maybe it would be better to say that writing and design are interdependent modes of representation.

A: Do you think that the writers would say that the meaning that the readers take away comes from the "content" as opposed to the "form"?

S: Yes. (Laughs) Like I said, it depends. For somebody like Steve or Brooke, they definitely see the two as crisscrossing and not only inseparable, but as having equally valid things to say. The form, especially in Brooke's piece, *The Gregg Bendian Project*, is very prevalent; the surface has been marred quite a bit. And that's for a good reason. Jazz has so much to do with form. I think good design opens up. Like we said in that letter, "Design functions as a grammar

Continued »

--- upon a time ---

MOON

in a tense that marked the reader's comfortable distance from it, a calamity befell the good people of A.

It was as if the once-in-a-hundred chance of all the iambs, throbs, archaic rhymes and other contradictions of the legend had, according to the laws of probability, hit a single beat in million THAT IS TO SAY, THE PRESENT AND COME TO BE'S and when, as predicted by the Second Law of Thermodynamics, the uprising put them all out of synch again, they felt as one the shattering of Time into its monumental, cosmic, historic, romantic and personal versions.

--- this Once ---

if only she could find a way to do it

A HERE AND NOW OF TOSSING AND TURNING THROUGH TWICE TOLD TALES. Shakespeare by way of Hawthorne, that die due to a gap between beginning and end when what was wanted was a MOBIUS TWIST, A UNION OF TIME AND DESIRE EVEN IF IT INCLUDED THE TEETH OF TIME AS SNAKE DEVOURING ITS OWN TAIL AND SHE LONGED FOR A WAY TO APPROXIMATE THE SENSE OF A WHOLE THAT WAS MUCH EASIER TO FAKE IN ART THAN IN LIFE, A TRANSFORMATION OF NARRATIVE REPETITION AS DEATH INTO REPETITION OF NARRATIVE AS PERPETUAL — **O!** she cried.

The Vogue model — High end is her self, not her look before, going to bed.

ANTIN

as during plagues,
The Errors,
famines, genocide---
as during threats of nuclear holocaust
and other Arabian nights--- the closure of
History, Theology, Science---

OL SCHEHERAZADE, PRAY FOR US!

That is, as during all the times that the final
hour of Time seemed to toll, people reacted, as they
always will in the past, which is to say, true to their
present.

On the hollow between Sic and Soc.

God's time

Together with mystics, they felt the hills and valleys of time level until all that was left was an epic stateliness of a perfect and unmovable moment — an intimation of what was once called

Kairos

THE GREEKS HAD TWO WORDS FOR TIME. **Chronos**, WHICH WAS "passing time" AS OPPOSED TO WHICH WAS "a static moment filled with significance."

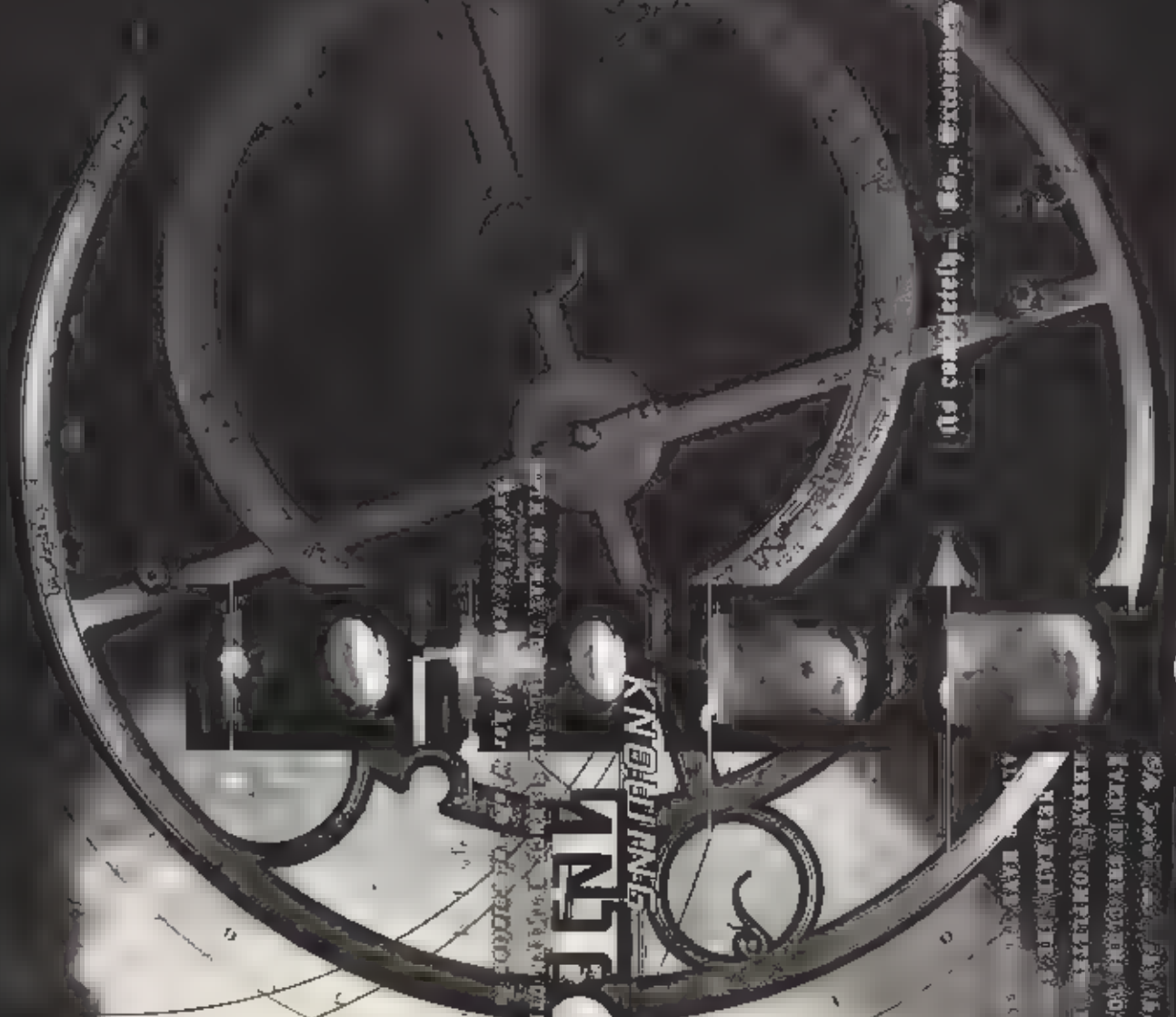
She imagined machines falling silent, stars winking out. She imagined the smooth skin of the power cord connected to the organic machine, then saw herself yank its plug free. BUT EVEN IF SHE PLAYED DEAD THE INSTANT SHE FIXED THIS SCENE IN HER MIND, THE INSTANT SHE OPENED HER EYES AND SAW THE DARKNESS AROUND HER ESSENTIALLY UNCHANGED, THE TWO ACTS OF SEEING WERE DIFFERENT IN TIME AND THEREFORE DIFFERENT IN MEANING AND SHE LET out a deep sigh.

AUG 16 1994
AUG 18 1994
AUG 20 1994
SEP 02 1994

*Slaves, going to bed
with their heads full of the Pope's words and his own*

With raised toward the
end, necessitating personal time in looking
themselves in spiritual or carnal revelry.

Others, however, looking at the Pope's words
as thoroughly



KNOWLEDGE
INTELLIGENCE
TRUTH

It is a great thing, indeed, to see
the world in its true light, and to see
the people in their true state. It is a
great thing, indeed, to see the world
in its true light, and to see the people
in their true state. It is a great thing,
indeed, to see the world in its true light,
and to see the people in their true state.

Together they waited, they felt the hills and valleys of time level until all that was left was an epic stateliness of a perfect and shimmering moment: no intimation of what was once called

God's time.

AUG 16 1984

AUG 18 1984

AUG 20 1984

SEP 02 1984

Kallos

Chronic

and she realized that to understand even the first bit of a story, a life, a history, a prison had to have a sense of a whole and complete narration. Unable to say *show* I have the whole about the narration that was unfolding as her own life, of course, she found herself guessing at its versions.

But God's Time was also
of those in comas, of family members who languish in the timeless,
clockless time of surgery waiting rooms.

On the night before she had to decide one way
or the other, the model set her clock with
dread in her heart, then lay down in a darkness
as deep as woman's night, while the growth
within and the organic-machine in the hospital
slept, she tossed awake wrestling with their
fates. She played out versions of human
history that differed only in duration. When
she diagrammed events within the sentence
of a single year, wars and treaties, famines
and earthquakes tripped over each other in
a mad stampede to the future. Whole
civilizations fell as leaves into an ever
deepening layer of compost and humble. When
she thought of these same events floating away
over the course of 10,000,000 years, though, she
came away with quite different impressions—
impressions that meant quite different things for
individuals.

Of this last group was a certain Vogue model whose
husband had been in a revelry that ended in a horrible accident. Doctors
immediately and feverishly went to work on his vitals. But sometime during
those tranquil, from his perspective, hours of surgery, he slipped away to the land
of deep and perpetual though not yet eternal sleep.

When the model was allowed in after her husband's operation, she stood at the
foot of his bed, unable to believe that the organic-machine before her was him.
His bugged eyes were enormous, twitching through cut-outs in a plastic mask. A
belly forced air in, then drew it out of the cavity that was his back. His body
while it pumped instead of a muscle made heartwaves course through plastic veins
and other extensions of the shadow that had been his former self. He was so
obviously in shock, which is to say out of time, that she couldn't stop thinking of
a poem about shades in a burning lake.

Some of the most of it is taken from the life
of the author and her family
and how far people

Why, in this time? she had asked, a press of her bare belly
to his neck for memory of what it had once been like as one

The wonder was that photo shoots hadn't
suggested to her sooner the arbitrary nature
of time an artificial grid through which
people could model the unmodeled

How else explain the existence of a sentence like
TOMORROW WAS ANOTHER DAY OF WORK? P

How else explain the fact that Time could be divided at all?

TOMORROW WAS DAY "

Thar's Gold!

Age Group	Percentage of Respondents
18-29	~65%
30-49	~75%
50-69	~85%
70+	~90%

...to each other
and ordinary

100-443887-100

At least one of the following is required for the award of the degree:

an expanding
a finger nail



The wonder was that photo shoots began to suggest to him, sooner the arbitrary nature of time an artificial grid through which people could model the unmodelled

How else explain the existence of a sentence...He
TOWARD... WAS ANOTHER DAY OF DRY ?

How else explain the fact that Time could be divided as a slip



360 DAYS HAD THE MESOPOTAMIAN YEAR 360 DAYS TURKS HEAR H

1915 HAD DIVIDED INTO 60 MINUTES

1663 TELEGRAPH DIVIDES WORLD INTO FIVE ZONES
STANDARD TIME HERE YOU LIVE

1756 DUE TO VARIATIONS IN EARTH'S ROTATION SECOND IS REDEFINED TO ARBITRARILY MEAN 1751,556,925,974.7 OF THE ORBITAL YEAR THAT BEGAN AT NOON ON JANUARY 1, 1900.

1961 NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS FREE STANDARD SECOND FROM ROTATION OF EARTH BY DECREE
THE SECOND ON THE DECAY OF THE QUANTUM ATOM
TO BE KEPT WITHIN 100 NANOSECONDS OF SECOND

00:05:00
00:07:00
00:08:05
00:10:00



A MOMENT LIKE THIS, WHEN THE CAMERA OF PASSION OF BOREDOM
OF CONFESSION, OF FULFILLMENT OF THE EVERYTHING DESIGNED BY WHATEVER WOULD LOOK INTO
THE EYES OF HER PHOTO.

THE MOST REPETITIVE PART OF HER DAY LOOMED OPPRESSIVELY LARGE

THE MOMENTS FROZEN WITHIN A
TO THINK OF HER HUSBAND
SOMETHING. Sometimes
WHICH WOULD BE THE

A MOMENT LIKE NO OTHER
OF COYNESSE AND WIT
THEY MET AT THE
CAMERA OF PASSION OF MORENO
BY MARY MARY (1901-1912)



A large, stylized, high-contrast black and white illustration of a mechanical or architectural structure, possibly a clock face or a large wheel, with various components and a small figure visible. The image is oriented vertically but appears to be a horizontal composition rotated 90 degrees clockwise. It features a large circular frame with internal segments, a small figure in the upper left, and a small circular element in the lower right. The style is graphic and abstract, with heavy black lines and white space.

[Faint handwritten notes on lined paper, possibly bleed-through from the reverse side.]

never would have been going to bed
losing one's virginity,

LIKEWISE, DID THIS
 ENDLESS REPETITION
 MAKE THE UNIQUE ACT
 MEANINGLESS? WERE
 THE MOST MEANINGLESS
 ACTS THOSE THAT COULD
 ONLY HAPPEN ONCE? —
 Defining young as the
 closing one's virginity;
 dying?

COOL CHILL

000101



The heart of a woman beats 77 times per minute

a number that cannot be divided evenly by 12.

YICIL

QINTO

KISSEM
OCTOBER
BY THE
QINTO
THE
QINTO

ALL PLACES ARE PRESUPPOSED AND RECORDS
THAT ARE END WILL BE STOW UPON THE
WHOLE DURATION AND MEANING

And clear & new world the music of her heart before going to bed

AND TIME AS NAUSEAM. Did this never ending cycle mean that the universe was meaningless? Or did each iteration of that original moment lead further from the truth?

OF STARS FALLING INTO EACH OTHER, ONLY TO EXPLODE THEIR STRENGTH INTO MOMENT-BLANKS, TO COALESCE INTO STARS

THE ATTEMPT OF THE RE-ENTRY OF THE

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BUT THERE REMAINED AN ARCHEOLOGY OF FLESH

A DISORDERING OF EPOCHS THAT WAS A DISORDERING OF FLESH

WHAT ELSE CAN THE FILM ITSELF BE BUT EACH OF MY MOMENTS PRESENT ALL AT ONCE

BEFORE THE MODEL COULD FORMULATE AN ANSWER WORTHY OF THE SINGLE UNREPENTABLE MOMENT THAT WOULD BE EMBODIED IN THE ACTION ANOTHER PERIPHERAL EXTENDED LIFE

THE PREGNANCY WASN'T WORKING. Her brother had promised to show her a window before coming inside of her

She knew it too. SHE WHISPERED INTO HER HUSBAND'S EAR

A PREGNANT TEND OF AN UNDISCLOSED PREGNANT. SHE COULDN'T LINGER OVER THE PREGNANCY AS SHE HAD TOYED WITH HER HUSBAND'S POWER SWITCH. HE COULD GO ON IN HIS WAY INDEFINITELY WHILE THERE WOULD EXIST A VOCABULARY THAT ELIMINATED SUCH EXISTENCE

ITS SHADOW FROM SOMEWHERE IN A FUTURE YET-TO-BE REALIZED

INDISTINCT FORM OF THOSE FICTIONS PUT ANOTHER SUGGESTION TO HER MIND. In the eclipse of a

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Yet if one made up their narrative by saying it then there wasn't any need to boom the reader. Now create suspense in fact, the problem of characterization or any of the other traditional concerns would wither before the problem of the ending. What would a real character do in the present if she knew that the next moment would be her last?

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The heart of a woman beats 72 times per minute

a number that cannot be divided evenly by 12.

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INTO

INTO

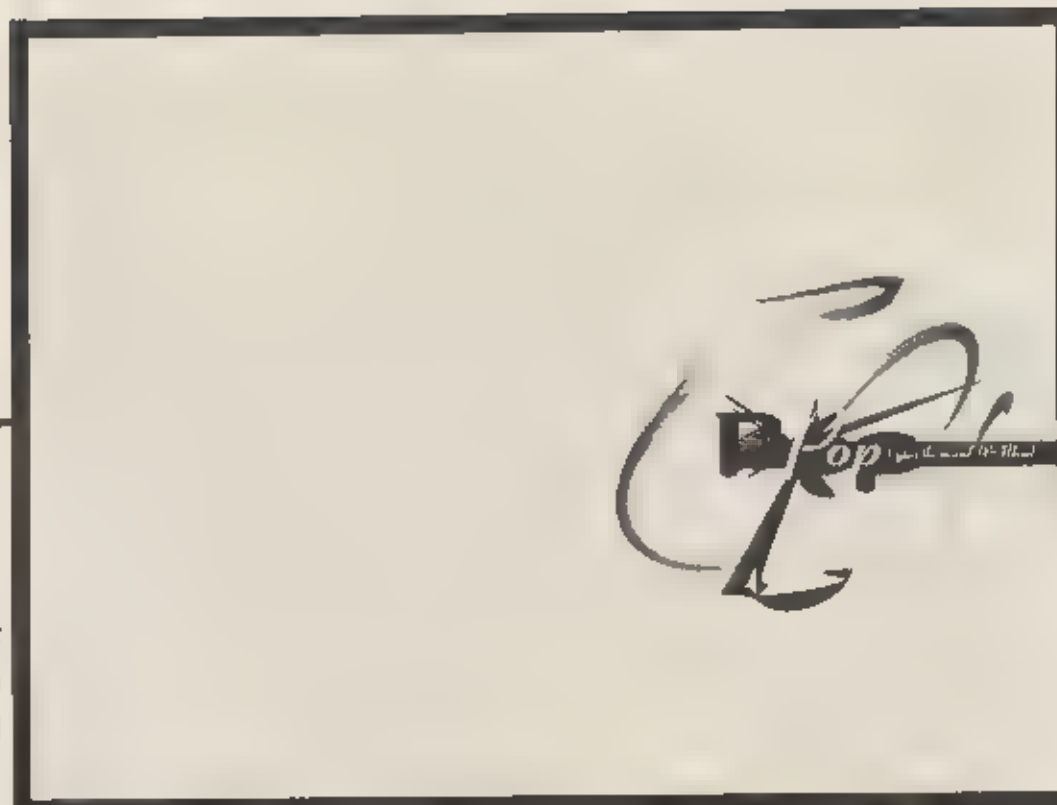
INTO

Toc (Previous 17 pages)
 Story by Steve Tomasula
 Design by Stephen Farrell for SLIP—
 Film and Photography by Stephen Farrell
 Additional Photography by Gregory Halvorsen Schreck
 and Steve Tomasula
 Thanks to Julie Loffin for supplemental modeling.
 Astrolabe courtesy of The Adler Planetarium, Chicago, Illinois.
 More SLIP— /Tomasula in *Black Ice* literary magazine
 Correspondence at 76504 2135@compuserve.com

The Gregg Bendian Project

Text by Brooke Bergan

Design and Slinky instrumentation by Stephen Farrell



that expands the narrative." And I think some of the pieces do lend themselves more to an expansion of grammar than others.

A: When you say "open up," do you mean...?

S: That we are actively adding our visual coding onto the verbal coding — mindfully, of course. It enriches meaning by maybe creating contradiction, ambiguity, all the things that imagery can add; that presence, that immediacy. Taking advantage of those things that design has — that are not impossible for the writing — but that I think are much more difficult for words. Also, I mean opening up in the sense that the designer's persona is now a subtext. I become a co-author in each of these pieces. It takes a lot of courage for a professional writer to allow a designer to be a co-writer. Especially with the cultural perception of design — you know — that we don't read. I think that the writers see us, first of all, as bound up with the marketplace a lot more than they are.

A: Well, you know, that's just funny to me. (laughs)

S: Of course, it is. (laughs) But there aren't very strong reading requirements in a lot of [design] programs that I know. The writers seem in some cases to be more well-rounded than designers.

A: Well, **THEY READ!** (laughs)

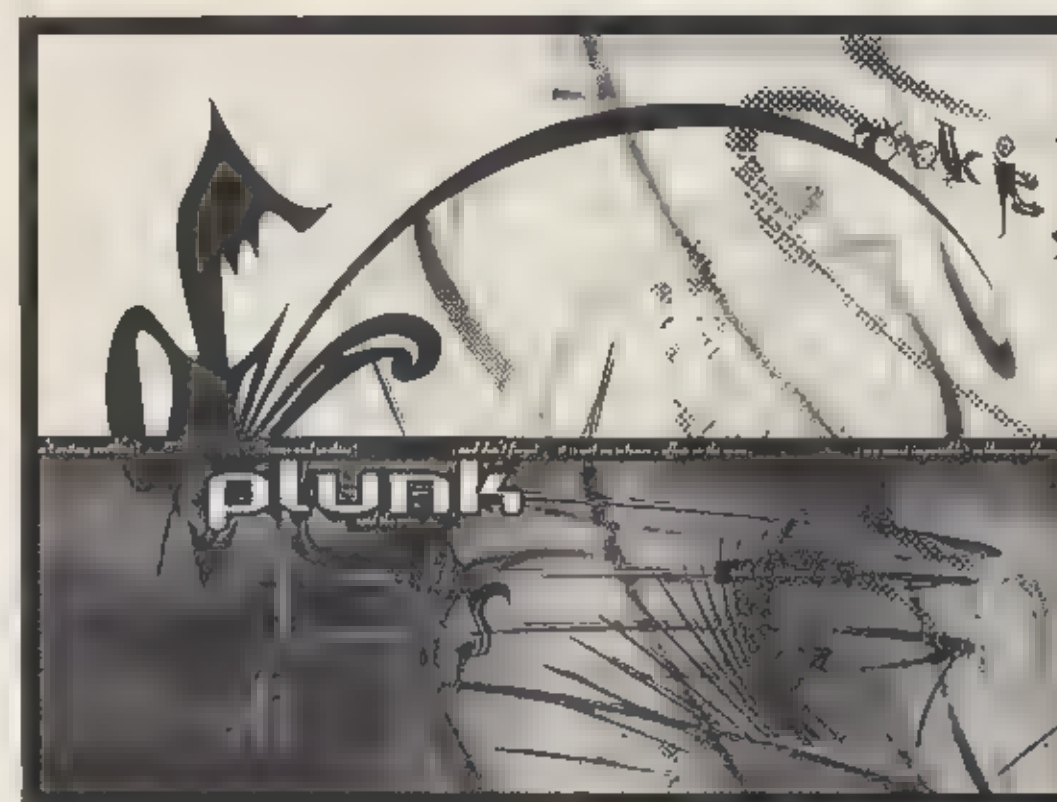
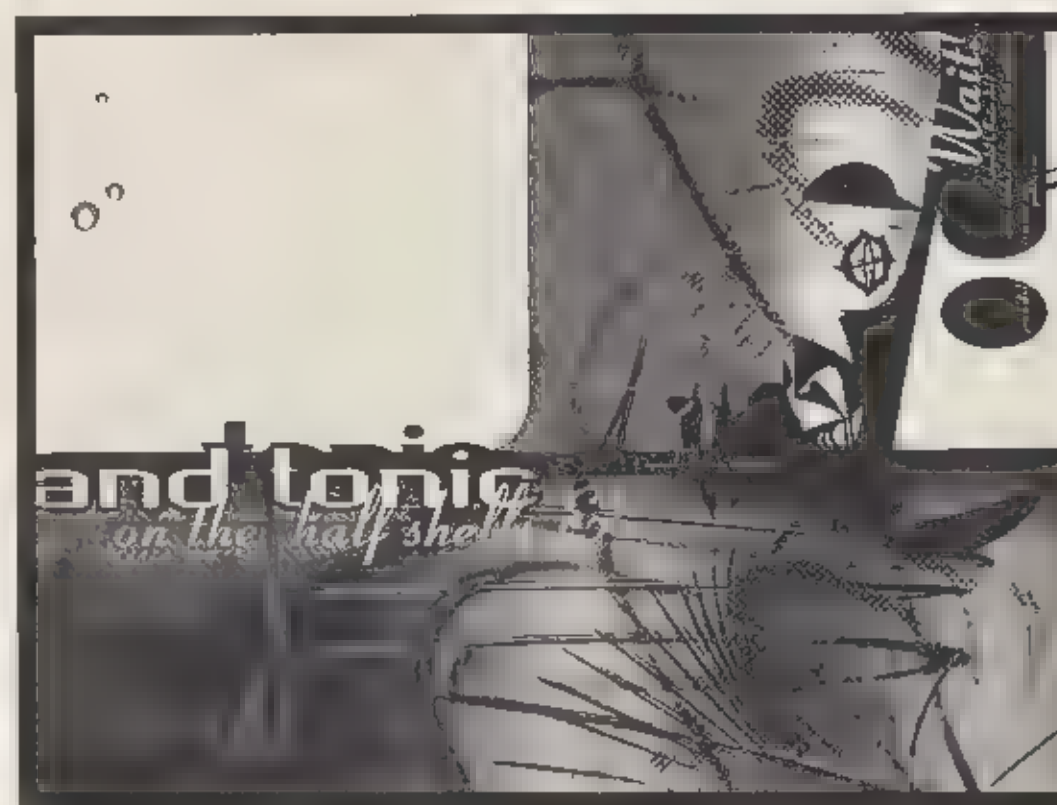
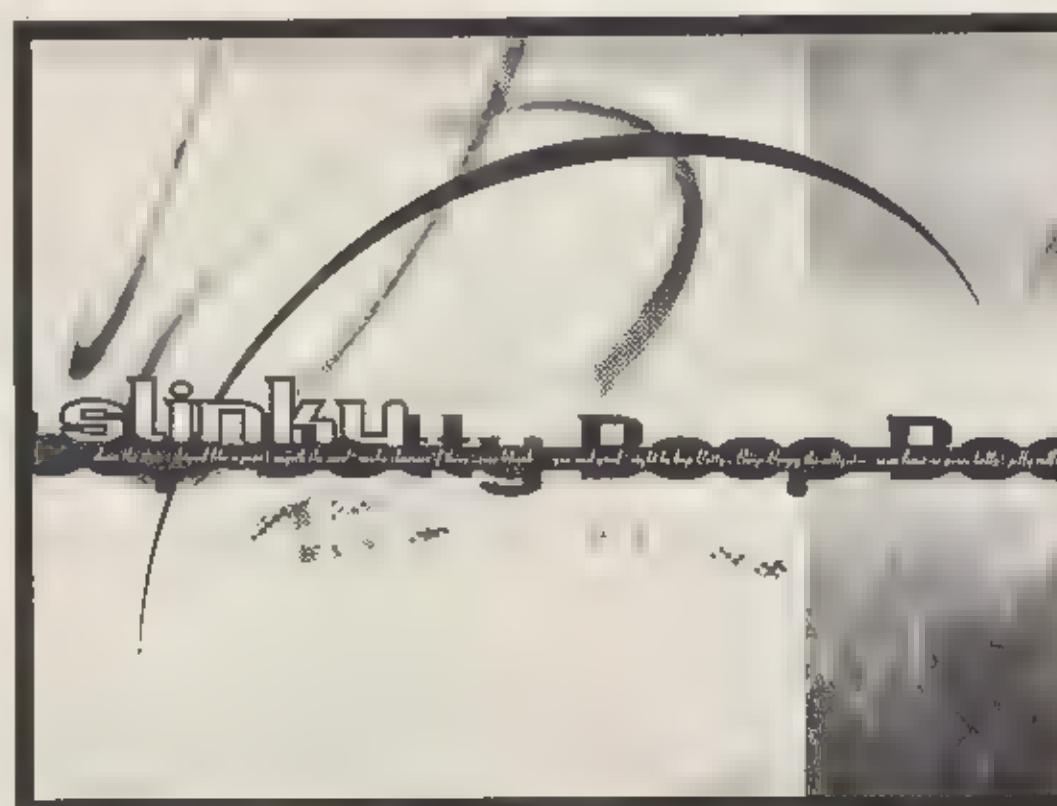
S: Yeah, and maybe the philosophy and the criticism and things like that — this may sound stupid, but they're not visual. I've often thought it would be interesting to do an entire philosophy book purely with images. I mean, could you get across the philosophy with our code? With the visual code? I have seen several interesting attempts that merge the two, like John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* and *ANGST: Cartography* by Mojdeh Baratloo and Clifton J. Bolch, *Semiotext(e) Architecture* and works by Diller + Scofidio. But it is extremely difficult to rely only on the visual code, just because of the way that we read images.

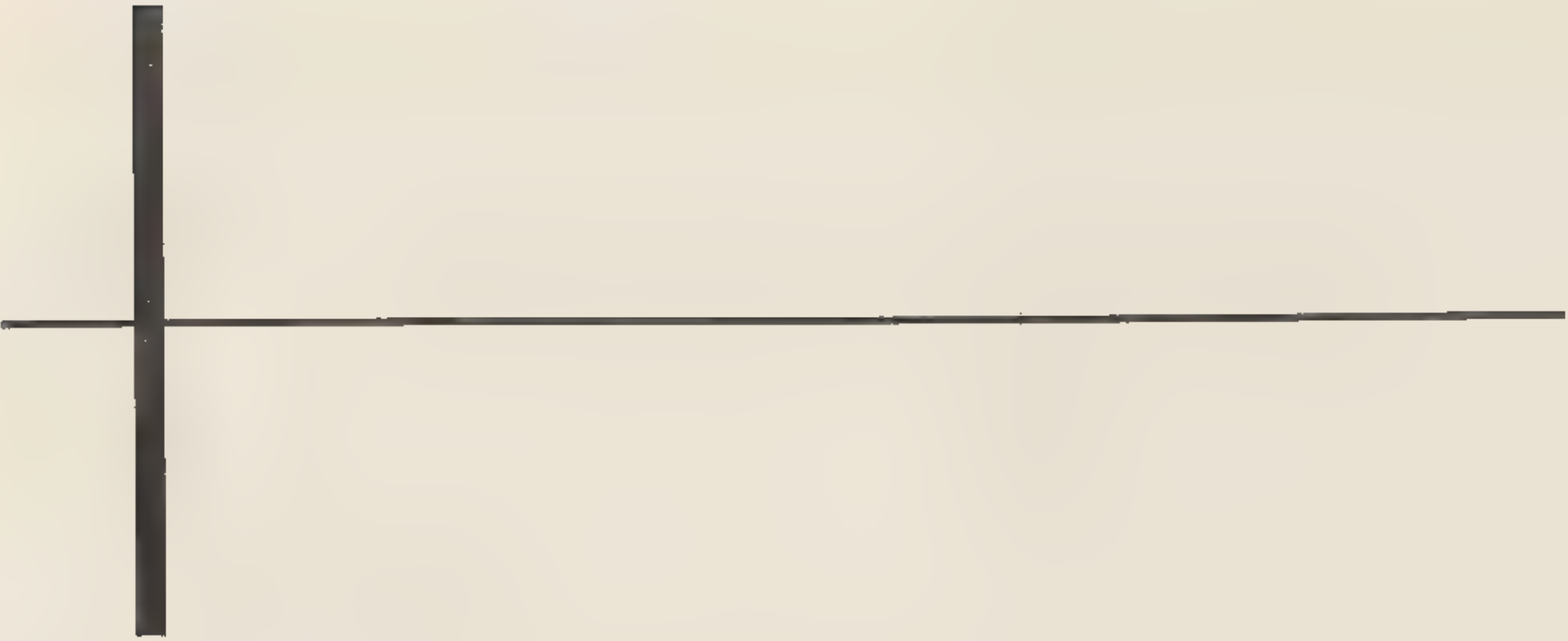
A: Yeah, and they've got so much invested in words. We're trained from a very early age to be verbally literate.

A lot of graphic design that's meant solely for graphic designers is understood because we have a kind of visual literacy; there's a whole history we've learned, we've been taught a shared vocabulary. But it's still an esoteric knowledge. With literature, you get it in high school, you're told this is an important thing, you're given historical examples. You're trained to understand it. No one is taught how to read graphic design.

S: What we are taught about literature in school is that reading is **HARD**. The misconception about images is that they are easy to consume and easy to produce. Like you said, without a sense of history or complexity, it's just what you see is what you get.

But even as designers, we frame and evaluate our work





books in circulation, so a monk would get a book for a year or so and he would not only memorize it by verbally repeating the words but he would also write interpretations and translations and comments in the margins. This was their method of internalizing a text; many times the glosses would actually be larger than the texts. The text was meant to grow. I don't know if you'd exactly call these "joint ventures," but definitely the text was seen as open-ended, added on to, to be rebutted, to be commented on *in the original text*. It's not just coming out with a book of criticism afterward; it's actually defacing the original and expanding the narrative. I think all that is embodied in the idea of the joint venture.

Dan rooted joint venture in the business culture so that it could be understood not only by writers and designers but by everybody, because we're not talking only to ourselves. He wanted to place it in the lap of commerce. He doesn't see poetry as a fringe activity and neither do I. Poetry is misperceived as a static genre – we tend to think all poems must resemble those of Wordsworth and Keats or Kerouac and Ginsberg. We tend to think of poetry in one way – as "historical." The term "joint venture" makes poetry current and dynamic.

A: *I wanted to talk to you about another thing that you said in your letter. You wrote: "These texts are examples of co-authored work, where the designer coaxes from the written word a voice, a resonance. With material gesture and intonation and a visual lexicon atmosphere amidst which this voice may perform." I can understand what you're saying, being familiar with how your work was created. But if I saw your work amid other work that had an equal "volume" of design to it – not more or less design, just more apparent design – would the co-authorship, the collaborative way it was created show in the work? If you hand something to a typist and they type it for you, that is a kind of co-authorship; you're both bringing it into material existence. It bears the marks of each person's involvement.*

S: But there's an explicit hierarchy.

A: *I see the distinction you're making. But do we see this in the work itself? Or do we need to look to the positioning and the working relationships and the discourse that circumscribes the work? Is there something that can be found in the work that makes it truly different from, say an annual report handed over from a CEO to a graphic designer? Isn't that a kind of co-authorship in the same way?*

S: Yes, it is. When I said that the designer coaxes from the written word a voice, that happens with any design, because as Raymond Federman says, "writing is blackening pages." The juxtaposition of typefaces creates dialogue. Even in the annual report, design allows the CEO's voice to be secure or risk-taking, authoritarian or fatherly, and to overlap and discourse with all the other voices surrounding that corporation. When you get into poetry and fiction, the voice

oftentimes is not only the voice of the author, but the voice of the characters, or the voice of the mood, whereas the mood in an annual report may be a white stage with a spotlight, so that the stage is transparent. The stage in the Gregg Bendian piece is filled with dancing spotlights and glimmering cymbals, and all of these instruments and activity. The voice is different. And yet, looking at it from outside, it is the same in a way.

I don't think [collaborative projects] assume a superior position above these other kinds of design. If the pieces I've created for *Private Arts* were set in a standardized way, that would be a lie. It's all context-driven. The great thing about fiction and poetry is that the voices are theatrical and so the design can be theatrical. Designers need to internalize the text before they begin designing. If you allow yourself to be a reader, the voice emanates from the work. When I'm reading the words, I begin to hear the kind of voice that I would like to put with the words. I put "resonance" after the word "voice" because I equate a lot of design with sound. Dan writes his pieces for the spoken word. When they're set in text, it's my job as the person who's giving it form to be that throat, that body, to create the sounds, to create a resonance, to create a background, to create the stage – with the author. I'm not the only one who does the work. The material construction begins by listening. Designers have to be really good readers and listeners. That's such an important part for me in designing these pieces: to listen and then to react to what I hear.

End.

linguistically. You know, look at what has fueled much of design for designers – literary theory! Logocentric semiotics! As the public's hunger for the image grows, designers have sought validation in the refuge of theoretical discourse – piles of words. There's a book, *Picture Theory* and in it W.J.T. Mitchell suggests an iconography of the text to complement our textual reading of images. That intrigues me. Maybe that's one way to think about design's role in writing

A: In *Mouthpiece 2* [Emigre 36], Louise Sandhaus uses Barbara Stafford's *Artful Science* to talk about the Western bias toward serious, linear, linguistic, rational argument and the history of our suspicions of the visual, pleasure and entertainment as some kind of trickery or deceit. You know, the truth pursuit. (laughs) Since we're talking strictly Western culture here, it makes sense that graphic designers would have inherited such biases. In fact, I would say that we're keenly aware of the suspicions that writers (anyone!) have of the level of depth or seriousness we bring to our considerations

True confessions here, but the fact that your work is so much about atmosphere and depth made me wary of it, at first. Louise uses this particular history to discuss our suspicions of the digital realm. Have you done anything in digital media?

S: The *Toc* piece, which we had originally designed as a print piece, is being converted to a multimedia 30 minute film. The text is spoken and we have background music, and a certain text fades in and out, then we use those images

But I'm still stuck on the applicability of multimedia a little bit. I'm still exploring the whole idea of depth and atmosphere in pieces that stand still. I don't want to rely on motion as a crutch. I would rather spiral inward than across right now. There hasn't been a piece that's come up yet where I've thought, I want to do this in multimedia first

I'm involved with Dan whose pieces are either artifacts or pure spectacle – they're performance, and multimedia is somewhere in between. I tend to prefer the pure spectacle. I enjoy actually experiencing his live performance with the visuals of his gestures and the intonations of his voice. When I start to think about translating that into a visual that would be a multimedia performance, I can't think of anything. I don't know how it would expound the narrative...

A: So, you see it as levels of simulation?

S: Yeah, I guess I'm still suspect of the digital realm as a whole, because my screen can be such a barrier for me. It's obtrusive

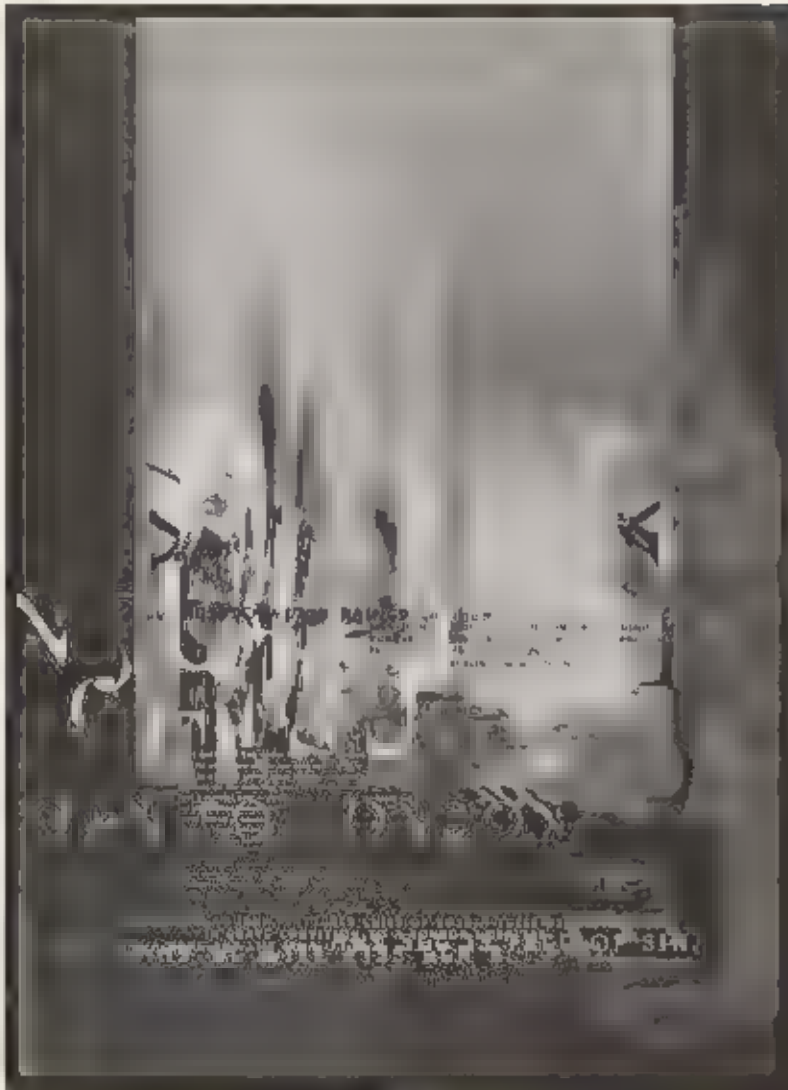
A: So it's the tactile aspects?

S: To some degree, I still use digital, obviously, quite a bit. But a lot of times these pieces will start out as tactile. Maybe I'm still

Injured Child Flown to London

Design, illustration and typeface design by Stephen Farrell

Text by Daniel X. O'Neil



stuck conceptualizing on paper.

A: Maybe it's a matter of shifting your thinking from crutch to possibilities. (laughs)

S: I have a lot of friends who are working in multimedia. From what I've seen, a lot of the spontaneity gets lost. I'm in fear of that. I can't stand it when I finish a project and I have lost all of the spontaneity. It's just gone.

A: The Gregg Bendian Project has a great sense of spontaneity. I'm curious about the working process between you and the writer on that piece.

S: Brooke writes a lot of pieces while she is at a performance. She will compose or jot down notes while she's experiencing it. I've watched her work and it's literally a reading/writing sort of thing. I received that piece after I had met her very briefly.

A: Were you at the performance?

S: No, I wasn't at the performance and the first thing that I wanted to do was to go hear Gregg Bendian. But then I thought, No. It's this whole idea of deferring the meaning and how beautiful it is not to see them. Brooke's poem was my jazz performance.

Even with Dan's piece, *Injured Child Flown to London*... that was originally inspired by two TV news events. Janet Reno speaking before the Security Council and then the media blitz surrounding the child

who was injured in Bosnia. So when he gave me the piece it was already once, twice, x number of times removed from the actual events – which were references to still other larger events. I think that part of what we're doing is that "glomming" process that you [and Louise Sandhaus] were talking about, this piling up of ideologies. It's not really a piling up, it's more of an interweaving. It's not a way necessary to go back to the primary source.

A: I like that because it's getting away from the notion of a primary source, a "truth" source.

S: Which I think is very important for the writer/designer argument – that cohabitation of image and text. When writers try to hang on to their traditional role as primary or original source, they also imply that they have a kind of sovereignty over the space their words occupy.

This relegates design to a quiet maneuvering in someone else's domain, tending somebody else's garden. Or, to put it another way, the silent page represents a kind of visual etiquette – the suppression of interruptions. You know, "Don't talk when your father's speaking." That's why I hate to position these designs as "pass-off" projects or sedimentary projects, or even that word, "glomming." I would rather use a word that conjures up the textile, that notion of weaving, where the writer's ideology and the designer's ideology are woven in with everything that come before because then the origin really doesn't exist.

A: That's what's really nice about words like intertextuality or inter-culturation. It's not a one-way motion.

S: We say that in theory but I don't know if we believe that yet. I don't know if I believe that yet. We may say intertextuality but that means relinquishing our status as creators, as the center. That's a hard thing to do; it jars the ego. But writers like Steve and Dan have truly been an inspiration for me. They subscribe to the notion of co-authorship, that intertextuality is not just a theory, that it's real. They let go. So by the same token, the final criteria have to be: Is the design opening up the meaning or is it shutting it down, shrinking the meaning?

A: There are some who would argue that as your design becomes more overt (because it strays from the convention) – Robin Kinross says this in *Fellow Readers* – that it's actively directing the reading, that it's laying a heavy-handed interpretation onto it rather than opening it up.

S: I think that the designer's role is not to create confusion. The designer's intention is to extend [the text]. It's to add a distinct code, not to erase or cover the code that already exists.

A: Not obliteration?

S: No, absolutely not. There's a difference between ambiguity and confusion. There's a difference between editorializing and editing. I would agree that in a way we're editorializing but I don't think the designer is editing anything out. Because the text is not just the

An interview with Stephen Farrell

words, it is much more than the words. There are ways to get these meanings across where a word may be replaced by a picture. Well okay, so the word's not there. But the picture may have the meaning of the word plus all these other cultural connotations. Is that shutting down or opening up? In the end it's for the writer and the designer to decide. And each writer will have a different stipulation for how far the designer can go before they are infringing upon the core meaning or amplification that the writer wanted to set up. A: So in that relationship, does it always come back to the writer as having the final word?

S: No, it comes back to the writer and the designer together. I think that just by allowing the designer to have the piece to work with, the writer is already allowing certain liberties to be taken. And it's important that they know and respect this up front – that design isn't just beautifying a piece, that it's going to be co-authorship, a joint venture. In return, the designer must respect the text, respect the craft of writing. If that's all understood up front and agreed upon, then the problems are very minimal. I think it's important for the writer and the designer to be discursing, both visually and verbally, throughout the project.

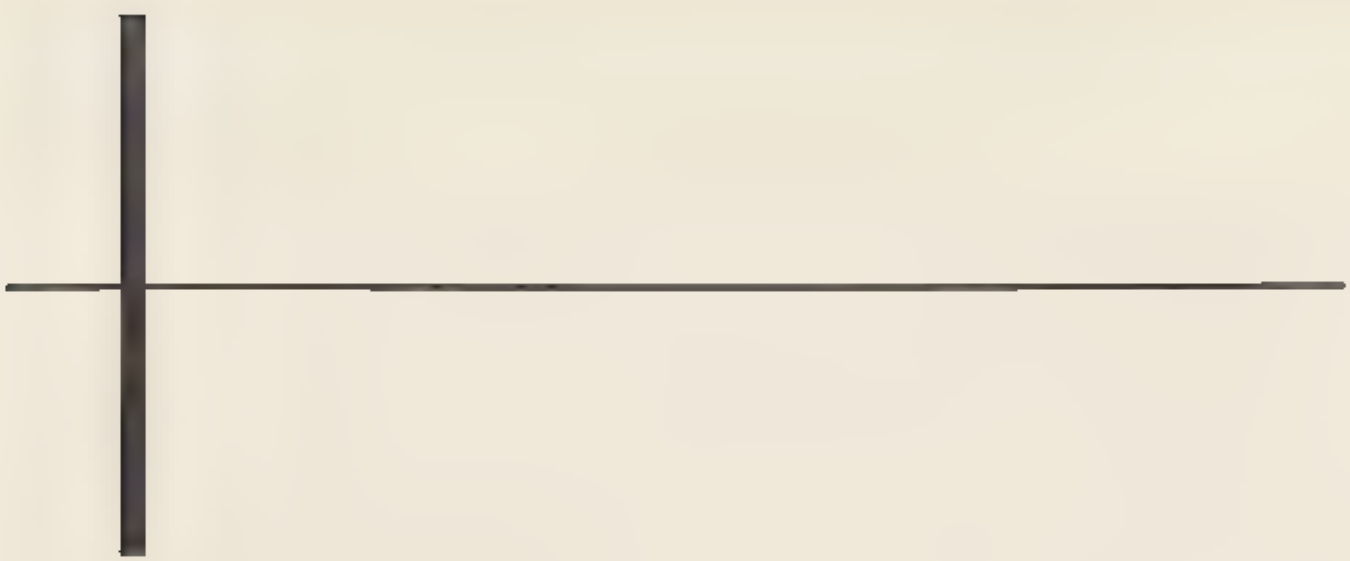
With the *Toc* project, Steve had started writing once we had already worked on several other pieces. He began thinking about the imagery and design from the beginning. We had discussed the form as he was writing the piece. That was even more of a collaboration than some of the other pieces. It takes a long time to foster a relationship like that. It takes a lot of mutual respect and letting go. I need to have the same sort of catharsis with the design as the writer does with the writing.

A: You have used that expression "joint venture" and Dan O'Neil has written about it. What do you think about his proposal, this notion of joint venture, posed in positive capitalist terminology?

S: You know, if we change the semantics... I stumbled across a word the other day, "textorian." It means a weaver. What if we weren't called writers or designers, what if we were both called textorians? It immediately sets up the connotation of equality. We're weavers. In medieval times, people saw the text more as a living thing, a living organism, something that was open-ended and not static. Hopefully, we're getting back to some of those ideas. I think that "joint venture" implicitly brings all that business language in line with a kind of mystical idea of a living text and egalitarianism.

A: What are these medieval notions to which you're referring?

S: When Steve and I were looking for precedents, obviously we found them in the Futurist program and the graphic novel. Well, we also found interesting parallels in the illuminated manuscript. The large white margins of the manuscripts weren't merely a formal convention, they were actually meant for the heteroglossia. There were very few



books in circulation, so a monk would get a book for a year or so and he would not only memorize it by verbally repeating the words but he would also write interpretations and translations and comments in the margins. This was their method of internalizing a text; many times the glosses would actually be larger than the texts. The text was meant to grow. I don't know if you'd exactly call these "joint ventures," but definitely the text was seen as open-ended, added on to, to be rebutted, to be commented on *in the original text*. It's not just coming out with a book of criticism afterword; it's actually defacing the original and expanding the narrative. I think all that is embodied in the idea of the joint venture.

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A: I wanted to talk to you about another thing that you said in your letter. You wrote: *"These texts are examples of co-authored work, where the designer coaxes from the written word a voice, a resonance. With material gesture and intonation and a visual lexicon atmosphere amidst which this voice may perform."* I can understand what you're saying, being familiar with how your work was created. But if I saw your work amid other work that had an equal "volume" of design to it — not more or less design, just more apparent design — would the co-authorship, the collaborative way it was created show in the work? If you hand something to a typist and they type it for you, that is a kind of co-authorship, you're both bringing it into material existence. It bears the marks of each person's involvement.

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End

PROMOTING GRAPHIC DESIGN TO WRITERS HAS PUT WRITER STEVE TOMASULA IN A UNIQUE AND SOMETIMES DIFFICULT POSITION. STEVE'S SHORT STORIES AND ESSAYS HAVE APPEARED IN A NUMBER OF PUBLICATIONS, INCLUDING, MOST RECENTLY, *THE REVIEW OF CONTEMPORARY FICTION*, AND HE IS A WINNER OF THE SIEGRED STARK LITERARY AWARD. BUT IT IS IN HIS ROLE AS THE FICTION EDITOR OF THE LITERARY JOURNAL *PRIVATE ARTS* THAT HE HAS TAKEN UP THE CAUSE OF THE VISUAL FORM OF THE WRITTEN WORD, AN EXTENSION OF HIS INTEREST IN META-FICTION THAT ATTEMPTS TO UNDERScore THE ARTIFICE OF LITERARY PRODUCTION THROUGH THE MANIPULATION OF THE VISUAL SYNTAX OF THE BOOK AND OF THE PAGE. AT *PRIVATE ARTS*, HE HAD TO FIGHT SMALL BATTLES IN A LARGER EFFORT TO BRING WRITERS AND DESIGNERS TOGETHER. WHILE HIS INITIATIVES WERE MET WITH SKEPTICISM AND RESISTANCE FROM WRITERS WHO FAILED TO SEE THE POSSIBILITIES, GRAPHIC DESIGNERS WITH EQUALLY NARROW INTERESTS DID LITTLE TO HELP HIM MAKE HIS CASE. NEVERTHELESS, SUCCESSFUL CONNECTIONS WERE MADE, MOST NOTABLY HIS OWN COLLABORATION WITH GRAPHIC DESIGNER STEPHEN FARRELL.

» Anne Burdick «

An interview with Steve Tomasula

Anne Burdick: Stephen Farrell mentioned in his interview with me that you guys argued the first time you got together.

Steve Tomasula: Only the first time? (laughs)

A: What were these arguments about?

S: Oh wow, we're getting to the nitty-gritty right off. I think that basically it comes out of an intrinsic tension that arises between the two spheres from which we both approach a common work. For example, when I would show the people on the staff [of *Private Arts*] something done by a designer, their first wail would be: "I can't read this!" And conversely, when I would show something to a designer, they would have the same kind of knee-jerk reaction, but based on how the piece looked. What this story illustrates is that neither of these groups is reading the text to see how the design and text work together. I think that the ideal distance to view a piece of design is at arm's length — people will hold it at arm's length and look at the whole page, whereas the ideal distance to view a piece of text is from inside it.

But I want to stress that I like working with Stephen because he does read. He reads in a way that a lot of people don't. So we have a cooperative disagreement.

A: Is it based at all on a struggle for control?

S: Stephen likes to put things in those terms. Maybe I'm being blind to my own desires for control. I think that it's more a matter of finding the right medium for the work. Like in the book *Laocoön*, where Gotthold Lessing describes the difference between epic poetry and sculpture. You know, what's the right subject for an epic poem as compared to a sculpture? With sculpture you're going to represent a single moment, so it isn't as good a medium to describe a plot-driven story, as for example, an epic poem would be. The example he uses is the *Iliad*. If a poem stops and describes a moment or thing, such as Achilles's shield — how long can a piece of prose support the amount of detail that can be put into a painting? The thing would just die unless other things were going on. That's how I look at it; not so much as who's controlling it, but what's right for the piece. I don't think that every piece of fiction, for example, or every essay lends itself to the kind of treatment that we did with *Toc*. It was done for a specific reason, trying to trigger certain reactions in the reader.

A: Tell me a little bit about your collaboration on *Toc*.

S: It's probably a good example of what we're talking about here. I was thinking originally in terms of the visual and design all along. The visual content was just as important to me as the text of the story. The story is basically a meditation on time. Stephen came up with a great way of creating within the reader the sensation that the story was trying to express in words. It was his notion to have the story split in half and turned upside down, so the reader had to

read back across text that was already read in order to get back to the start. That's something that you just couldn't do with words alone. I think it really worked well; I thought he had a really great idea. Poets do this all the time; they structure things in such a way that it forces the reader to read in a particular way. But poets aren't doing this with visuals, so I think that *Toc* gets a double bang that words alone can't. I could explain fear to you by using words, or I could just come up to you and say "boo!" when you're not expecting it. The second way is just more visceral.

Part of this meditation on time is the notion of time as a kind of social construction and, really, another fiction. For me, then, it was important to underscore the constructed nature of the story itself. Making the analogy with painting, you can have a painting that is trying to serve as a window onto the world or else one that mars the surface like Jackson Pollock's. He forces you to look at the flat surface, and consider paint itself. I wanted to do some of that. I still wanted to tell the story; it is entertainment, after all. And yet I wanted it also to critique itself. The design of it was just the perfect way to get that idea across. If nothing else, it certainly mars the surface, calling attention to itself as black ink on white space, that it is a construction: an example of being in time.

A: Stephen had mentioned that some of the visuals came even before you wrote the entire piece.

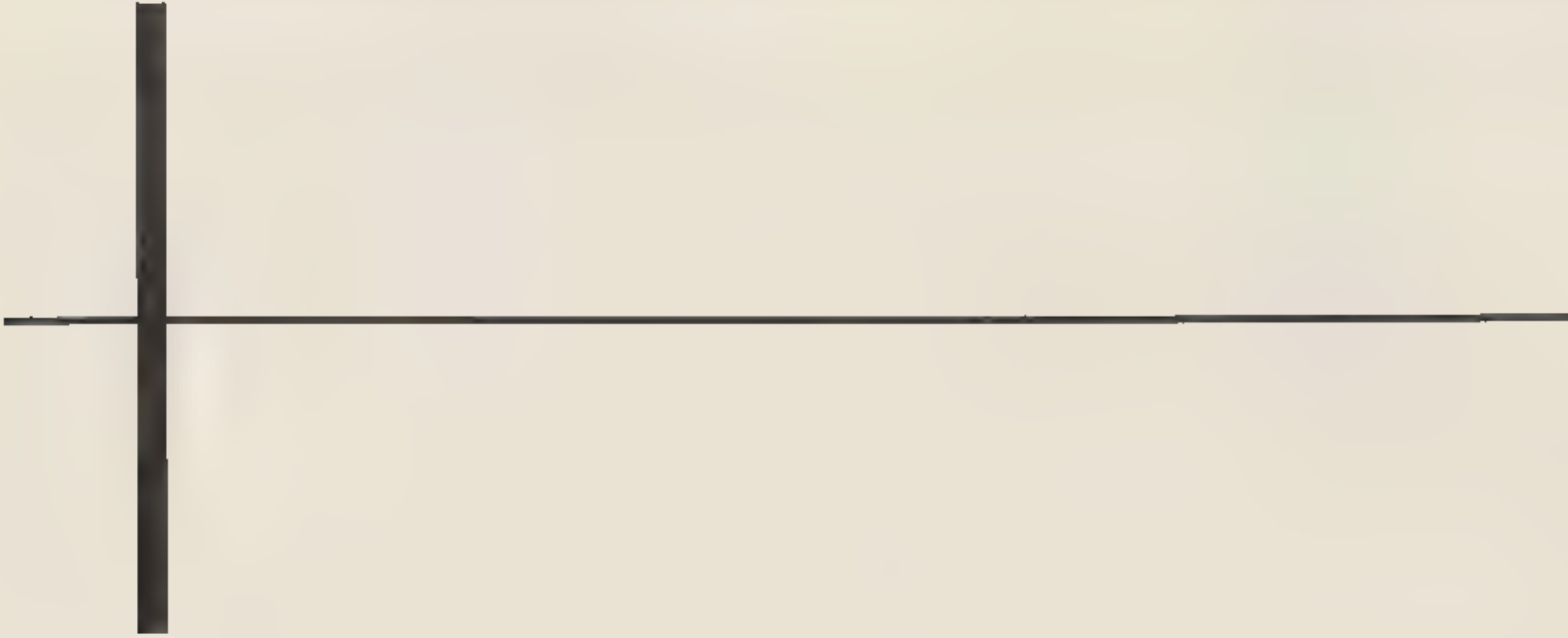
S: I think in terms of pictures a lot, which makes it easy to work with Stephen. And we read a lot of the same stuff, too. That makes for a nice joint venture between us.

I liked the notion of rings on a tree as an icon for the passing of time. Then, given the element of human mortality that informs the story, I thought that it would be interesting to use a thumb print in place of tree rings. Those are sort of the raw materials that came from me and then Stephen did his thing with them. Of course, he turned the piece into something far more sophisticated than I would have been able to do on my own.

A: I had a boyfriend who was a singer and when he was writing songs, sometimes he developed the music first and put the words to the music, sometimes the other way around, and sometimes the two would evolve together. I've always thought about the back and forth relationship between the formal structure and the words in this way. Is it possible to write and design with the same flexibility? How much of the structure, of the pacing of the story and the flipping over existed prior to your fleshing out the whole body of the story?

S: I completed what I thought was my end of it and gave it back to Stephen, then he did his interpretation of it. That's when the back and forth really started, at that point.

A: You mentioned that Stephen had devised the structure of turning the story over and you said, "You just can't do that with words." In



fonts, he'd probably go ballistic. The translation of this reaction would be, "Don't mess around with building into the form of my poem cues as to how it is to be read, because I've already done that!" The guidelines were a way of saying, well, no, we're not going to do this with every piece. We're going to try to do it with some that look like they'd be good for it. You know, the question was, if you put a squiggle on the page as purely a design element, does that constitute designing the piece? It's the question: if you change the context of it, do you change the content as well?

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S: Yeah, I think that was the very battle we were fighting.

This idea of form and content... maybe form and meaning is better. In the William Gass book called *The Tunnel*, there is a character who is trying to write a history of the world in limerick form. He brings up the point: why is it impossible to write tragedy in the form of a limerick? It's a good question. Does it have something to do with the form itself or just all the associations we've brought to limericks? You know, a lot of these forms are probably dead if you think of it. Like an epic poem as it's commonly defined: a serious poem in an elevated style about a hero upon whom the fate of his people depends. Who could write that poem today? Unless it was done ironically. I would imagine the same thing would apply to design as well.

A: Well, yeah, sure, but at about a millimeter's depth. (laughter) The forms aren't invested with as much and they change much more rapidly. I think that the difference is that the kind of literary forms that you're talking about are connected with a whole tradition, whereas typographic form or the look of photographs from a particular moment in time... Of course there are all these forces of production, such as the technology, or the history of portraiture and the way that people posed at one historical moment as opposed to another, that embodies all these notions of what we thought about the individual or class or the consumption of the image... Or something like what Marinetti did: this breaking free of the vertical and horizontal axes as a metaphor for breaking from all other vertical and horizontal axes... Actually, the equivalent would be in the history of grids used to structure the page, grids as a form of mapping or dividing space. The modernist grid, based on the square and conceived of as lines and units that go off endlessly in all directions, is essentially a Cartesian construction that is based on a belief that the physical world is ruled

by universal, objective mathematical laws and can be reduced to repeatable geometrics; its fundamental units. That's something I try to convey to my students: that the structure of the page can be seen as the embodiment of a particular philosophical perspective.

S: That's fascinating. You see, this is one of the frustrating things for me. Once upon a time I thought I'd be able to do this stuff on my own, then it quickly became apparent how much you have to know to do it well.

A: Do you consider the designers you work with as co-authors, do they receive equal credit?

S: Yes. I think that when it's done right it truly is a joint production. But too often it seems to be lopsided. Especially when I try to link up a designer with an author. I haven't had as much success with that as I'd like to.

A: In what ways?

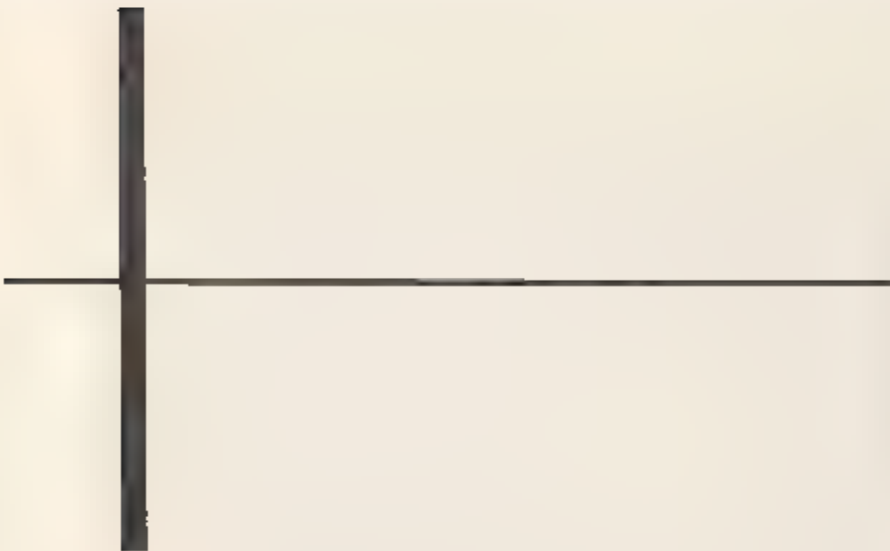
S: In terms of it being a truly joint production. I hate to keep bad-mouthing designers, but you're egging me on. We have one story that we've been trying to do for two years now and have yet to have anyone pull it off visually in a mature way that the author likes. Take someone like John Yau, whom we were talking about earlier. He's spent a lifetime reading and dedicating himself to literature. To find a designer that can work with him at that same level, that's not an easy thing.

A: It really takes someone who's interested in literature. Someone who is either interested enough to pursue it on their own or who has some education. Design programs can't begin to be expected to turn out designers who... I don't know, I think the students here at NCSU are really smart. But I think it wasn't until some of them were designing their own words that they started to understand how typographic changes can shift the emphasis.

There's a project that they give at CalArts called the "Macro/Micro" project. You have to take an essay from outside in the big cruel world, that is the macro view. Then you have to write a response to it, your micro view, your personal fit into the bigger scheme, so students can rely on what they already bring to it. Then you have to design the two pieces together on the page so that visually what takes place relates to what's happening verbally. You have two elements that you're setting up a relationship between, plus you've got an investment in what the words say, so it really helps you to start to think of the page as a site of connotation.

S: Which is what it's all about.

End.



editing **Mouthpiece**, it was interesting because there were a couple of pieces that students designed. So they were written first and then I sent them to the students who worked on them. I found myself in the position of liaison between writer and designer.

S: I find myself in that position all the time.

A: A lot of these writers are designers. So they were incredibly apologetic when they'd have to say, "Well, I like what they're doing but this type is bothering me here." Or, "Well, so they want to take out every third 'I' in the story. I don't know, that's really messing with the story." I found myself coming down on the side of the writers most frequently, by far. I think that what happens when writers and designers do this as separate activities – I mean, for designers the only thing we have to work with or control is the way something looks. And I think that there's a tendency to want to pack everything that you want to say or everything that you think the piece should say into the way it looks, forgetting the fact that there are words there that are carrying a large portion of the reader's experience of it.

S: Sounds familiar (laughs).

A: At the same time, vice versa. Here you were, able to do a piece that contains something that you could never have done prior to thinking about the visual, physical form of it.

S: For me, that's the yin and yang of good design. If I can dump on designers a bit here, too...

A: Go ahead (laughs).

S: You know, the short of it is that a lot of them don't read. I'm looking for them to be artists that are going to bring ideas to a piece that nobody else would have thought of, and often they do. But they think of it in a separate capacity, too. Stephen has been my education in terms of design. He put me on to things like Ray Gun and the fonts and the manifestoes and all that. You know what I mean – the author's dead and bring live the Fourth Reich... (laughs).

From the writer's point of view (now it's my turn to dump on the writers), they're visual illiterates, many of them. You can tell this by looking at the covers of most of these literary magazines. They're poetic in the most bourgeois sense of that word. You know, the most typical literary magazine cover would be a watercolor of ships in the harbor.

A: I don't think that I would necessarily interpret that as visual illiteracy. I would read that as a huge investment in occupying a particular position within the body of literary output. If they make it look one way, they know it's going to be seen as a specific kind of poetry journal, as opposed to making it look a different way, which is going to make it look like a different kind of journal. However, they may be really banal...

S: They pull out a visual cliché to do that.

A: Yeah, it's not creative, but it's certainly codified.

S: Maybe illiterate is the wrong word, but definitely ignorant or not sophisticated. You know, the truth of the matter is that I think that writers, by the nature of their craft, are iconoclasts. They're trying to make something somewhat ambiguous in order to give it the richness that only an open-ended text can have. It's the opposite of technical writing, which ideally has a single meaning. For example, in Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, the guy wakes up and he's a bug. But Kafka himself said the bug can't be drawn. The reason is that he doesn't want it to be literal. We could ask, is this a story about Jews living in Vienna, or any minority, or the terminally ill? Of course the best answer is all of the above. So if you think of that story, you can see how that text could be absolutely destroyed by a bad designer. The sort of designer I'm thinking of here is probably better called an illustrator.

A: You're talking about a really literal representation of the story.

S: Right. Or another example – John Yau has a really great poem. His parents emigrated from China and this poem is about looking through their photo album. One photograph he's considering in the poem is actually a blank spot in the album and there's just the caption there that is something like, "pile of heads, Shanghai, 1947." It sets him off on a long meditation about his family, China, etc. The thing is that if that photo had been supplied by a designer, obviously the poem would cease to exist, as that poem anyway. That's the kind of thing that's in writers' minds. You know, we've got a long history of bad jacket design and gratuitous illustration that has more to do with marketing than poetics. It comes back to this thing about designers reading or not reading. An image can be disruptive. A lot of designers or artists want to be disruptive by changing the context of a piece, like Marcel Duchamp, putting his urinal in the Armory show. He changes the context and changes art forever. The thing that bugs me about bad designers is that they revel in this kind of disruption, in the grand tradition of the Futurists, but they don't see how it is also destructive. Not that I'm against disruption. I like design and literature that is in your face, that shouts, "Sweep away yesterday's literature!" But only if it does so consciously and in a smart way. Bad design destroys in ways that the designer isn't aware of because he or she doesn't understand what the text is trying to do. The attitude a writer will have – just to be blunt – is: "Don't shit where I pray." How many designers consider their work prayer? Too often, design is to fine art as tech writing is to literature and authors see designers as prostitutes with paintbrush programs, people who'll sell anything to anybody. This isn't meant to denigrate prostitutes, but simply to acknowledge that many designers are by temperament, training and profession sign pointers, not artists.

Do come back to my own distinction between illustration and design to show what I mean by good literary design. I think the graphic novel, for example Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, can be put into the design camp because it expends the narrative in a way that illustration wouldn't. For example, he's got one panel with the old Spiegelman on his exercise bicycle telling the young Spiegelman his Holocaust stories. He's telling him how when he was young, he was a real lady's man. So the image then is this old decrepit guy pedaling and behind him is this enormous poster depicting him as Rudolph Valentino in *The Sheik* and he's got a girl swooning in his arms. Just the juxtaposition... It becomes poignant with an incredible economy that... Just think of how many words you'd need to get across the ideas that get drawn here: vile young people thrown into a gas chamber, aging, the passing of whole worlds, high and low culture – see the difficulty I'm having describing it? Just the fact that these Jews are drawn as mice and the Nazis as cats would take volumes to explain and then could this



explanation retain the absurdity, the pathos of Jew-mice and cat-Gestapos? I think that's the way that design can work with literature, by giving it expansion vertically instead of horizontally.

A: I like that. It makes me think about the difference between looking and reading. You mentioned that you look at design at arm's length but the best way to look at writing is to be in it. Have you ever read Michel Foucault's reading of Rene Magritte's "This is Not a Pipe"? He talks about calligrams and how when you're reading, the image disappears but when you're looking at it, the words disappear. It's that back and forth interplay. I think that designers don't think about that as much as they should, that thing where you're going in and you're pulling back out, it's constantly building on itself. Stephen spoke about extending the narrative and the life of texts and their proliferation, looking at work more in growth terms than in confining, monolithic closed terms. Is this a concern of yours?

S: For me, that's something that's always been there. We're still reading Homer. You can go over to the library and find about forty million pounds written about *Dante*. These are all growths on the text just because there have been almost six hundred, seven hundred years of people talking about that one poem. So I don't see it as a new development.

A: Let's talk a little bit about authorial intention, that dirty, outdated word.

S: What's that? (laughs). The next issue of *Private Arts* is going to include work by John Matthias, an extremely insightful and nuanced poet. He sent me some poetry with a handwritten note that said, "Do not use an overly designed typeface that is too small!" And he underlined it about four times. I understand what he's talking about even if I don't necessarily agree with it. He's spent a lifetime developing a sense of meter, for example, that will control the pacing of the poem, even the breathing of the reader. And now we're going to turn this task over to someone whose vocabulary is visual and who hasn't looked at a poem since he or she was forced to read Longfellow in high school? I mean, come on. I think a lot of writers get the impression – okay, you want to talk about authorial control – their impression is that the designers are using these little typefaces to reduce the text to a line so that it is basically a design element. And that's what they're concerned about, having the design work with the text in a meaningful way, which for some writers means having the font and design remain invisible.

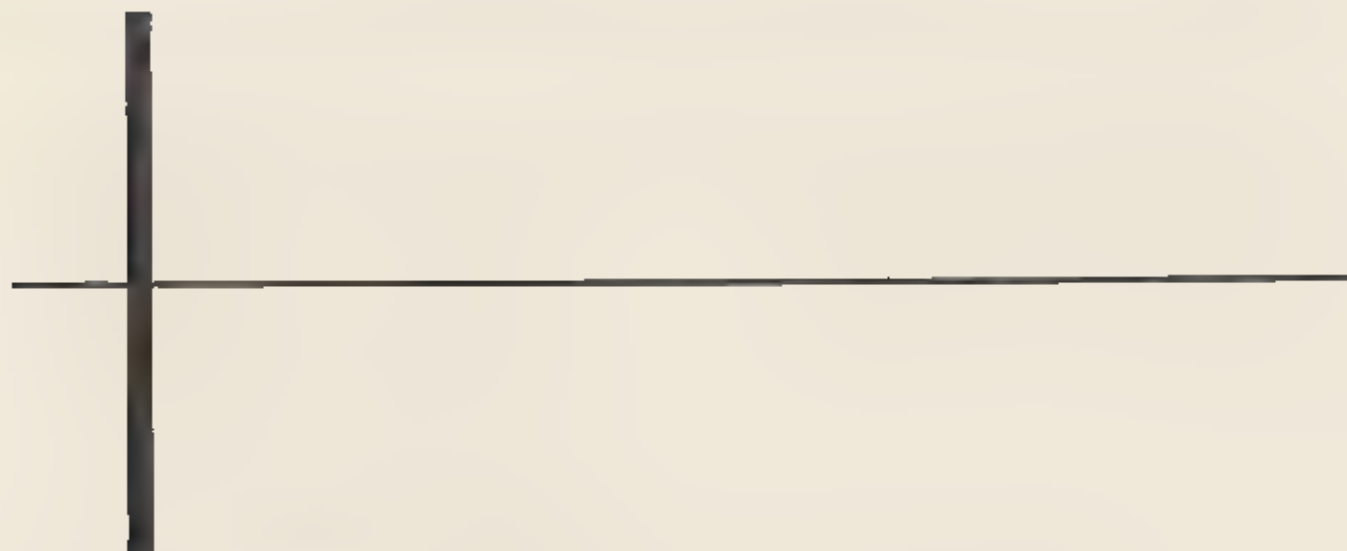
To cite another example: Charles Bernstein's a poet I like quite a bit. He writes about being taken into a space of enrapturement by the text. Like you might do with a movie when you're not even aware you're in a theater anymore. For that sort of thing, I think that text and its design should be transparent. It's playing a different game. In the Federico Fellini movie, *Il nave va* – it means "the ship goes on"

An interview with Steve Tomasula

or something like that – he uses the ship as a metaphor for life. The way it ends is that you see people on a lifeboat getting tossed at sea because the ship sinks. Then the camera starts pulling back and it pulls back so far that you see that they're in a movie studio and you see all the cameras and everything around the set. It's just an ingenious move that places the movie within the world and the world within the realm of storytelling. That's the kind of marring of the surface that we talked about before. Not every movie is about that. A movie like *A Room with a View*, which is based on the E. M. Forster novel, wants to take you back to the nineteenth-century character of the Victorian Age. It isn't going to let you see the wires and gizmos. So I don't think that every book or every piece of text will lend itself to the kind of treatment we gave *Toc*, although I would like to see more of it. In *Private Arts*, that's the way a certain kind of idea-driven literature is going because that's the way the world is going, as we can see by the revolution that has taken place in every single social science. And the hard sciences, too. It's also a tradition that goes back at least as far as the inception of the novel. The book that everyone will point to in this regard is *Tristram Shandy*, the Laurence Sterne novel. It plays with typography and stuff. So you have one of the early novels parodying novels and it's using typography and design to do it, which is just great! He plays with the gentle, decorous way of not mentioning the names of polite society by putting asterisks where the name is supposed to go. Then he'll let these asterisks gradually get out of control. He'll put an asterisk to indicate a footnote to explain it and you go down to the footnote and it's nothing but asterisks. Stephen and I used a visual quote from *Tristram Shandy* to begin the review we did of Raymond Federman's *Double or Nothing: A Real Fictitious Discourse* – a more contemporary landmark of design-driven meta-fiction.

A: Stephen mentioned that with *Private Arts*, you ended up giving the writers forms where they had to rank from one to five the "level of design" they would allow for their work. Can you give me an overview of the structure of *Private Arts* and put that into context?

S: That's an early embarrassment. This is when we first wanted to move in the direction of incorporating design as part of our project. I started getting interested in visually-oriented, dialectically-driven types of writing like Federman's and it just seemed like that was the direction in which the magazine should be moving because that was where the rest of the world was going. So that was kind of a hard sell to a strictly literary audience. We are a literary magazine, after all. I was trying to make this thing happen and trying to work around the kind of resistance I described earlier, and trying to allay fears because some of our authors are quite well known and we can't afford to pay anything. For example, John Ashbery is probably the greatest living poet. If you took on Ashbery poem and messed around with some



fonts, he'd probably go ballistic. The translation of this reaction would be, "Don't mess around with building into the form of my poem cues as to how it is to be read, because I've already done that!" The guidelines were a way of saying, well, no, we're not going to do this with every piece. We're going to try to do it with some that look like they'd be good for it. You know, the question was, if you put a squiggle on the page as purely a design element, does that constitute designing the piece? It's the question: if you change the context of it, do you change the content as well?

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S: Which is what it's all about.

End

NOT PARIS NOR SANTA CRUZ

NOT 1967 NOR 1973

THE WORLD AND MARC NAGTZAAM

"Dear Rudy VanderLans. Remember, the UFO had landed and some aliens invited the two of us on a little trip and there you asked me to be a star in your new movie. This happened two months ago. Am I still in it? Please let me know. As always, Yours, Linda Lovelace, 1973." So read one mailing in a series of mailings that has kept me wanting more. Linda had contacted me before. One time with a postcard stating I was "special" and that by returning the card I would receive "artwork made just for you." This I promptly did, upon which I received an honest-to-goodness piece of hair of Ms. Lovelace herself. Kind of hokey, really, if it wasn't that the mailings came from a place called Zanzibar Press with a return address printed by letter press in a style that revealed something more than a cheesy prank being played out.

Subsequent mailings underscored this. Among others they included: "A Small Collection of Stamps"; a small notebook with all but one of its pages torn out that read "This is the diary of Rudy VanderLans - March 1987 -;" and, one of my favorites, another booklet that had all texts and images obliterated except for one line repeated on each page that read "creating a feeling of disappointment." All pieces were small in size and took only minutes to view, a welcome characteristic among the many pieces of mail art sent in to the *Emigre* office each week. Over time I began to look forward to these mailings, worried, at times that I was taken off the mailing list when mailings were not forthcoming.

The person behind all this is a young Dutch artist by the name of Marc Nagtzaam. I've never actually met him, the result of the all pervasive modern methods of communication, I guess. For the past five years we've sent each other mail, faxed letters and spoken on the phone. We've even set up appointments to meet when I was visiting Holland, none of which ever materialized. Perhaps just as well - never having met Nagtzaam only adds to the mystique that surrounds his work.

After receiving the fifth installment of a series of magazines Nagtzaam is currently working on, I finally decided to find out more about him. The magazine is called *Tijdschrift* ("Magazine") and shows a distinct shift to a more collaborative working method that seemed to fit perfectly into the overall theme of this issue of *Emigre*. I tracked Nagtzaam down in Brussels, Belgium. Following is the transcription of two intercontinental telephone conversations I had with him in October of 1995.

Rudy VanderLans

Nagtzaam

Designer's note:

The following pages contain reproductions from various issues of *Tijdschrift*, a magazine published in Holland by Marc Nagtzaam and Piet Vlaemans. In laying out these pages I've taken some liberty with the originals. Here's why: when design artifacts are reproduced, something inevitably gets lost. No matter how perfect the reproductions can be, the look and feel, size, method of binding, page sequencing, etc., are all sacrificed.

By taking apart the original work and reassembling it to specifically fit the page layouts and sequencing of *Emigre*, a new work was created. What I hoped to accomplish was for the readers to encounter these designs not as framed pictures on a wall, so to speak, but as an integral part of this issue of *Emigre*. Although significantly edited in volume and recombined in a way that is distinctly mine, I believe Nagtzaam & Co's work is compromised only minimally and shines much like it does in its original form. » RVDL «

Emigre *What school did you attend?*

Marc I attended St. Joost in Breda. I studied graphic design for some time, and fashion design, and I spent two years in the fine art department. It was graphic design that I went to school for, but it didn't turn out to be what I expected at all. At the time, I admired Piet Schreuders and the magazines he produced, like *Furore* and *De Poezenkrant*. I wanted to do what he was doing, creating my own publications and work, not commissions for someone else. There are aspects of graphic design that I find quite intriguing, but there are parts of it I simply can't seem to appreciate at all. The look and smell of a book, and how the letters sit on the paper and the differences possible within that form, that I was attracted to. But the design department's philosophy didn't appeal to me; it was all so loaded with justification as to why you did something. The way they teach graphic design at St. Joost is somewhat conservative. A lot of emphasis on esthetics and big ideas relating to small subjects. It's quite conceptual.

Emigre *What's wrong with that?*

Marc Nothing, really. It just didn't appeal to me. I didn't see any possibility for personal involvement in most of the projects. Only the technical possibilities seemed important. I wanted to explore more and maybe applied art wasn't for me. I was interested also in illustration, which is why I eventually switched to fashion. But I found out there was very little opportunity to grow there. In the end I joined the fine art program and concentrated on painting, drawing and collecting all kinds of things and experimenting in diverse media. I loved to create small books and worked a lot with texts. Another reason why I left the design department was because we were constantly told to do something new; we had to continually reinvent ourselves and that didn't fit what I wanted to do. I was making a series of large collages using cuttings from drawings and magazines. I just glued them all next to each other until the sheet was filled. Since I always had this "artist garbage" around, I naively figured I could do that for the rest of my life. It would have made an interesting diary.

Emigre *When you decided to take up art, did you ever think of what that would do for your future? Were you at all concerned about the odds of succeeding within the world of art?*

Marc Not really. I realized that you can't force it, that you have to set your own tempo, you have to have patience. Joost Swarte has always been an example for me in this respect. I saw how long it took him to get to where he is now. He just hung in there and believed in the work he enjoyed doing. I recognized that as the right attitude. And so far it's worked out for me, too. Things are starting to happen for me. Things are coming my way. And because I didn't force it, I am prepared.

Emigre *Well, you haven't exactly sat back and waited for things to happen. You've always been producing your small books and projects and sending them out to people. You're doing more than just producing work. You're very consciously promoting and distributing it.*

Marc It makes little sense to keep your work for yourself. It is important that other people see it and that it communicates; only then does it really exist.

Emigre *What do you think your work accomplishes when it reaches people? As a recipient of your work, I know what it does for me, but I'm interested to know what you think it does for me.*

Marc That's a difficult question. It goes without saying that you show

Nagtzaam



Above
Collage, August, 1990
by Marc Nagtzaam

Previous four pages
from *Tijdschrift* no 3, July, 1994
Illustrations by Marc Nagtzaam, Noor de
Rooy and Piet Vloemans

Following page
Framed Worlds like a Wall Around You
Drawing (4th version), July, 1995
by Marc Nagtzaam



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Marc: Nothing, really. It just didn't appeal to me. I didn't see any possibility for personal involvement in most of the projects. Only the technical possibilities seemed important. I wanted to explore more and maybe applied art wasn't for me. I was interested also in illustration, which is why I eventually switched to fashion. But I found out there was very little opportunity to grow there. In the end I joined the fine art program and concentrated on painting, drawing and collecting all kinds of things and experimenting in diverse media. I loved to create small books and worked a lot with texts. Another reason why I left the design department was because we were constantly told to do something new; we had to continually reinvent ourselves and that didn't fit what I wanted to do. I was making a series of large collages using cuttings from drawings and magazines. I just glued them all next to each other until the sheet was filled. Since I always had this "artist garbage" around, I naively figured I could do that for the rest of my life. It would have made an interesting diary.

Emigre: *When you decided to take up art, did you ever think of what that would do for your future? Were you at all concerned about the odds of succeeding within the world of art?*

Marc: Not really. I realized that you can't force it, that you have to set your own tempo, you have to have patience. Joost Swarte has always been an example for me in this respect. I saw how long it took him to get to where he is now. He just hung in there and believed in the work he enjoyed doing. I recognized that as the right attitude. And so far it's worked out for me, too. Things are starting to happen for me. Things are coming my way. And because I didn't force it, I am prepared.

Emigre: *Well, you haven't exactly sat back and waited for things to happen. You've always been producing your small books and projects and sending them out to people. You're doing more than just producing work. You're very consciously promoting and distributing it.*

Marc: It makes little sense to keep your work for yourself. It is important that other people see it and that it communicates; only then does it really exist.

Emigre: *What do you think your work accomplishes when it reaches people? As a recipient of your work, I know what it does for me, but I'm interested to know what you think it does for me.*

Marc: That's a difficult question. It goes without saying that you show



Above
Collage, August, 1990
by Marc Nagtzaam

Previous four pages
from *Tijdschrift* no 3, July, 1994
Illustrations by Marc Nagtzaam, Noor de
Rooy and Piet Vloemans

Following page
From *Worlds like a Wall Around You*
Drawing (4th version), July, 1995
by Marc Nagtzaam

NOT PARIS NOR SANTA CRUZ

NOT 1967 NOR 1973

THE WORLD AND MARC NAGTZAAM

"Dear Rudy Vanderlons. Remember, the UFO had landed and some aliens invited the two of us on a little trip and there you asked me to be a star in your new movie. This happened two months ago. Am I still in it? Please let me know. As always, Yours, Linda Lovelace, 1973." So read one mailing in a series of mailings that has kept me wanting more. Linda had contacted me before. One time with a postcard stating I was "special" and that by returning the card I would receive "artwork made just for you." This I promptly did, upon which I received an honest-to-goodness piece of hair of Ms. Lovelace herself. Kind of hokey, really, if it wasn't that the mailings came from a place called Zanzibar Press with a return address printed by letter press in a style that revealed something more than a cheesy prank being played out.

Subsequent mailings underscored this. Among others they included: "A Small Collection of Stamps", a small notebook with all but one of its pages torn out that read "This is the diary of Rudy Vanderlons - March 1987 -;" and, one of my favorites, another booklet that had all texts and images obliterated except for one line repeated on each page that read "creating a feeling of disappointment." All pieces were small in size and took only minutes to view, a welcome characteristic among the many pieces of mail art sent in to the *Emigre* office each week. Over time I began to look forward to these mailings, worried, at times that I was taken off the mailing list when mailings were not forthcoming.

The person behind all this is a young Dutch artist by the name of Marc Nagtzaam. I've never actually met him, the result of the all pervasive modern methods of communication, I guess. For the past five years we've sent each other mail, faxed letters and spoken on the phone. We've even set up appointments to meet when I was visiting Holland, none of which ever materialized. Perhaps just as well - never having met Nagtzaam only adds to the mystique that surrounds his work.

After receiving the fifth installment of a series of magazines Nagtzaam is currently working on, I finally decided to find out more about him. The magazine is called *Tijdschrift* ("Magazine") and shows a distinct shift to a more collaborative working method that seemed to fit perfectly into the overall theme of this issue of *Emigre*. I tracked Nagtzaam down in Brussels, Belgium. Following is the transcription of two intercontinental telephone conversations I had with him in October of 1995.

Rudy Vanderlons

Nagtzaam

Designer's note.

The following pages contain reproductions from various issues of *Tijdschrift*, a magazine published in Holland by Marc Nagtzaam and Piet Vloemans. In laying out these pages I've taken some liberty with the originals. Here's why: when design artifacts are reproduced, something inevitably gets lost. No matter how perfect the reproductions can be, the look and feel, size, method of binding, page sequencing, etc., are all sacrificed.

By taking apart the original work and reassembling it to specifically fit the page layouts and sequencing of *Emigre*, a new work was created. What I hoped to accomplish was for the readers to encounter these designs not as framed pictures on a wall, so to speak, but as an integral part of this issue of *Emigre*. Although significantly edited in volume and recombined in a way that is distinctly mine, I believe Nagtzaam & Co's work is compromised only minimally and shines much like it does in its original form. » RVD. <

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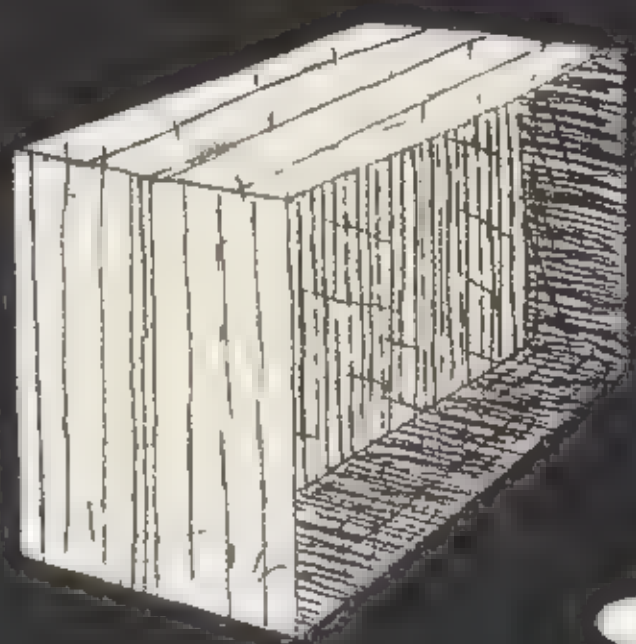
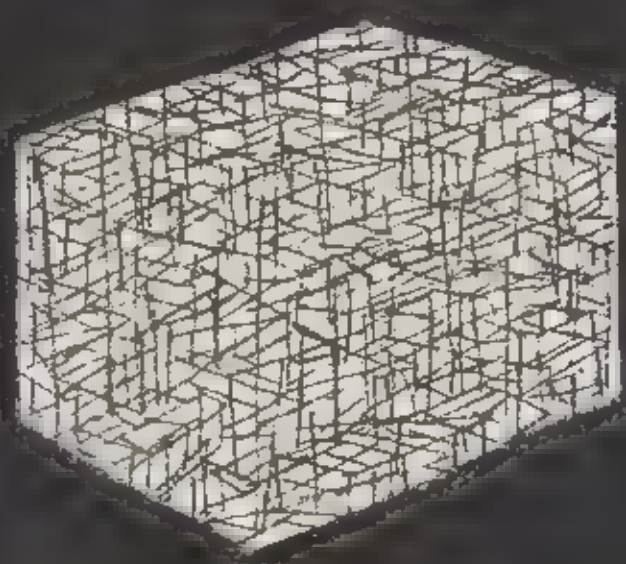
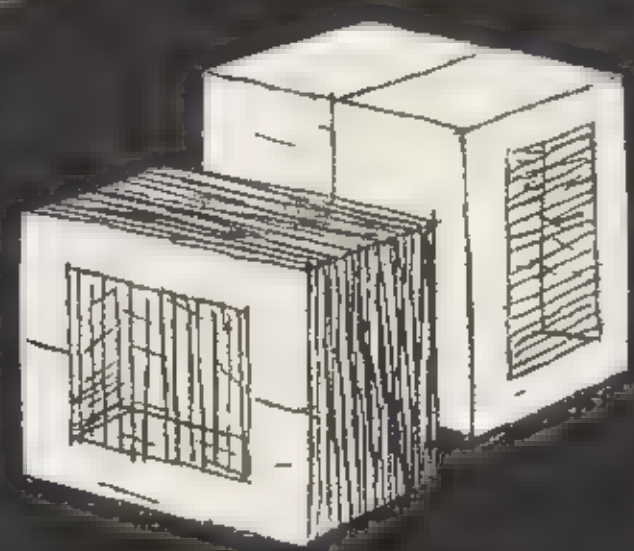
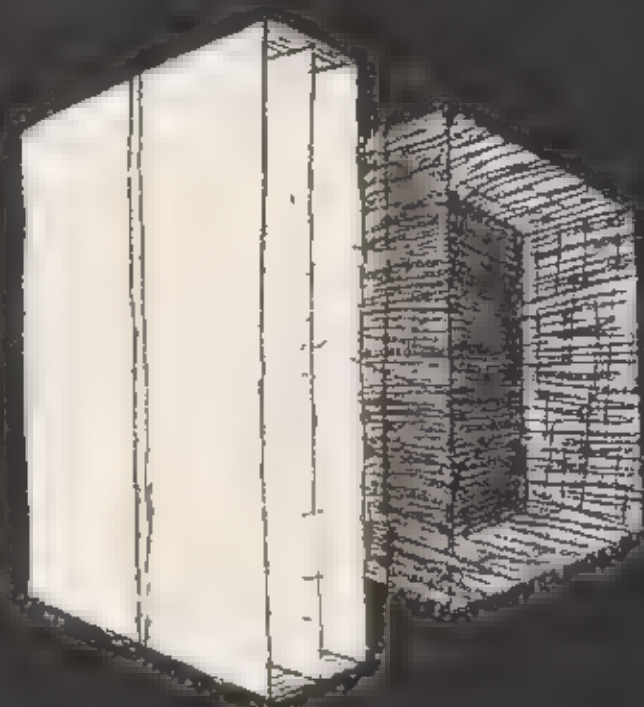
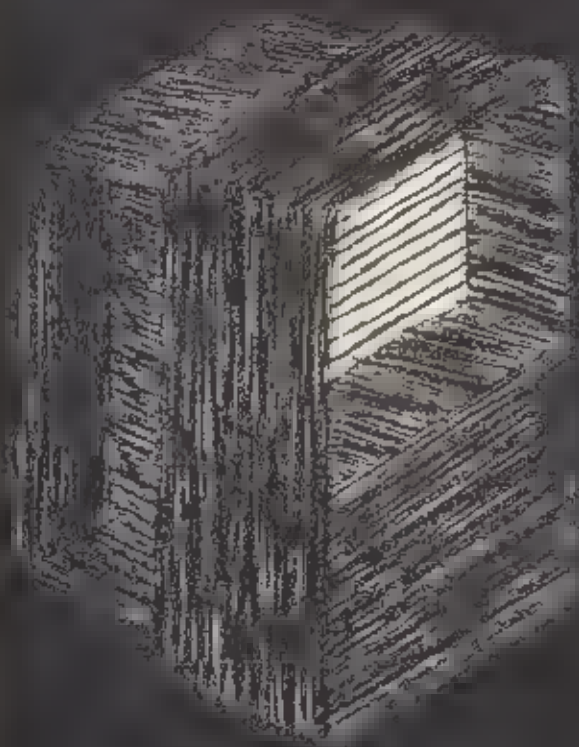
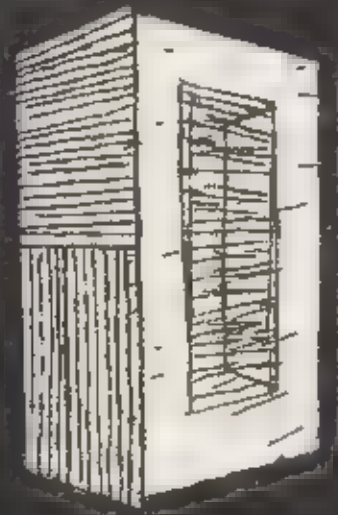
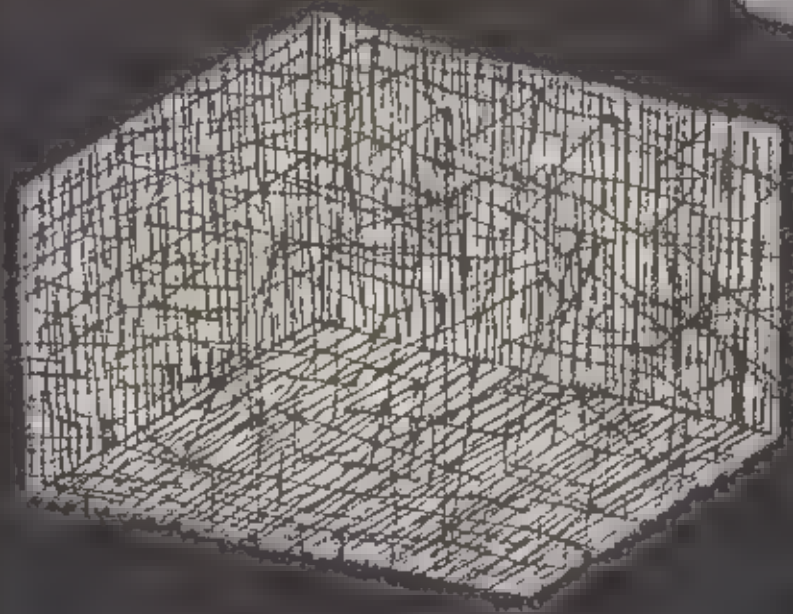
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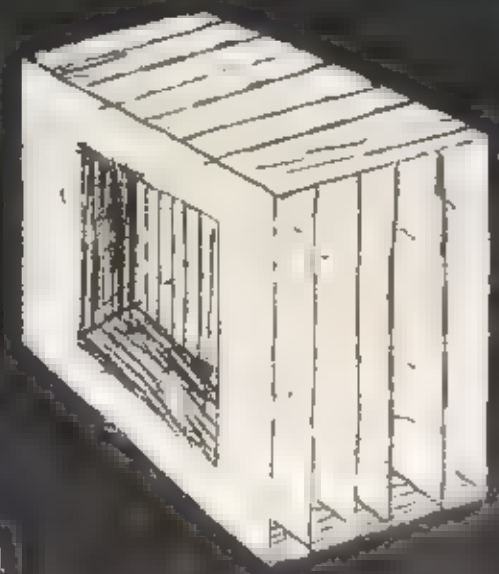
SCHOOL

OUTSIDE WORLDS / LES PETITES COLLECTIONS

(GOLDEN YEARS)



FRAMED WORLDS LIKE A WALL AROUND YOU.



(THIS PARALLEL UNIVERSE OUTSIDE OF ME /
THE PAINTED WORLD)

STAY

M.B

9. PLYWOOD BOXES

4TH VERSION / 18.0.1995

your work to other people. Since my work is not conceptual, there is no easy interpretation possible, so I never have a clear idea as to how people will interpret it. In general, it's about creating a world with specific elements like words, statements, colors and shapes without one single valid meaning or purpose. But to an extent, I imagine that my wonderment or discovery when creating this work is not much different from yours when you view it.

Emigre: *When you were in school, were you aware of any one particular movement or ideology?*

Marc: Not noticeably. There were encounters with people that were memorable. There were art history and theory lectures by people who had an interesting outlook on things. People such as Yves Klein, Marcel Broodthaers and Ad Reinhardt were great influences. But there wasn't much discussion about particular theories. If anything, the fine art department emphasized that you developed a mentality or working method that would enable you to do anything you'd like to. It is very important in your work that there is a kind of all encompassing overriding mentality that manifests itself in everything you do. That might sound quite vague but it isn't. Whenever I'm attracted to someone's work, it's because of that. It's the mentality that I appreciate in other people's work. Style was never very important. They never talked about the work in specific terms, like whether a red splash needed to be moved slightly to the left or anything like that. It was always more about the big picture. That freedom allowed me to do things that kept me from getting stuck. They expected a certain level of independence from us. They trusted that we would figure out what we did wrong for ourselves.

Emigre: *What kind of critique did your work receive?*

Marc: That it wasn't articulate enough. My work was lacking a clear point of view. Also, I had a tendency to repeat myself and I put too much emphasis on esthetic matters.

Emigre: *Did you agree with that assessment?*

Marc: To an extent. But if you look at the work of someone like Kawara, you can't dismiss it by saying it's too repetitive. Or the Italian painter Morandi, who spent his entire life painting still lifes with the same bottles and bowls. Sometimes repetition is what the work is all about. It's about the fact that you've done one thing all your life. Yet, at the same time, your work never remains static because you can neither force nor stop change.

Emigre: *Does your interest in Joost Swarte's work have anything to do with this?*

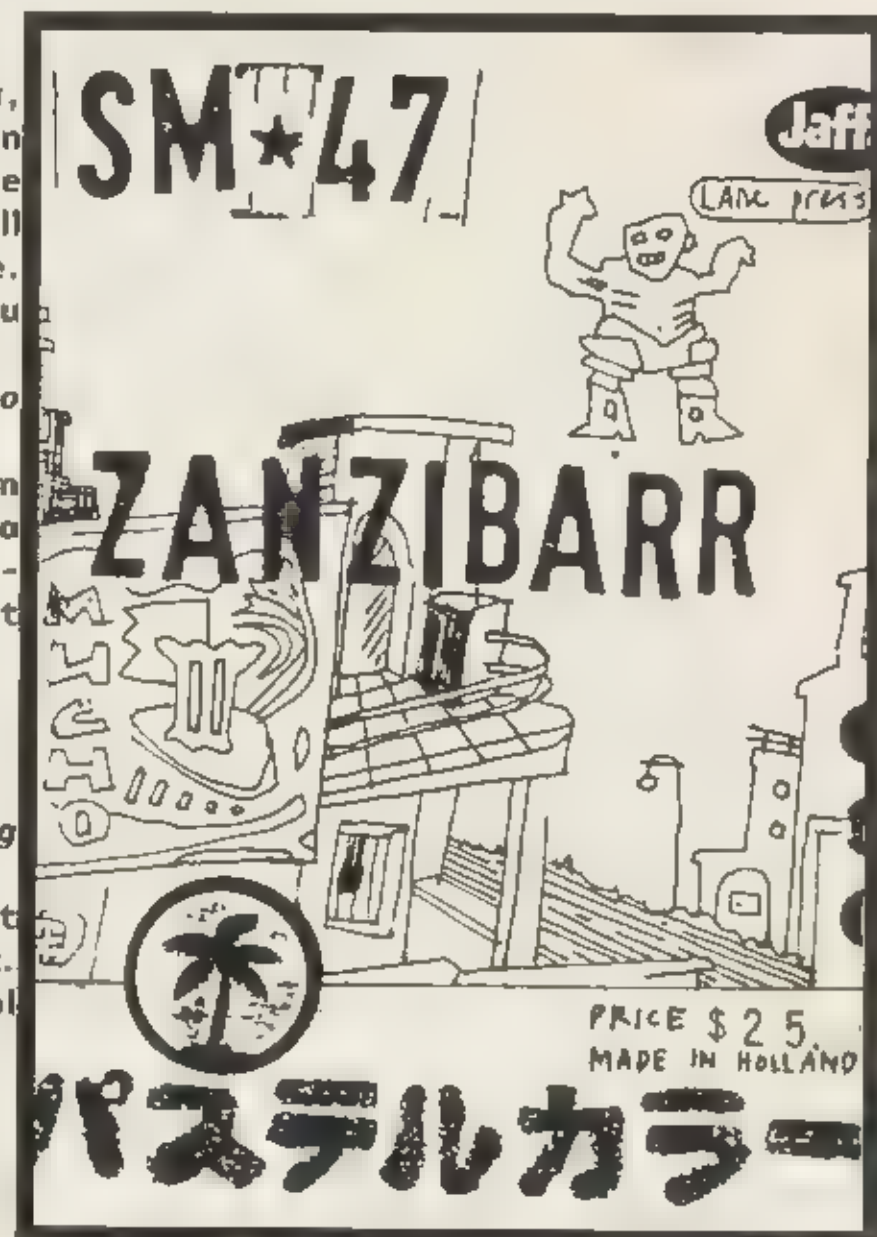
Marc: Yes. Although it might all look the same on the surface, I've seen his illustrations develop over time. And when you've developed a recognizable vocabulary like he has, you can eventually use it in unexpected or ironic ways, subverting the expectation patterns that people have of your work.

Emigre: *Do you have to be obsessive to be a good artist?*

Marc: I'm afraid so.

Emigre: *You finished school some three years ago; what are you working on now?*

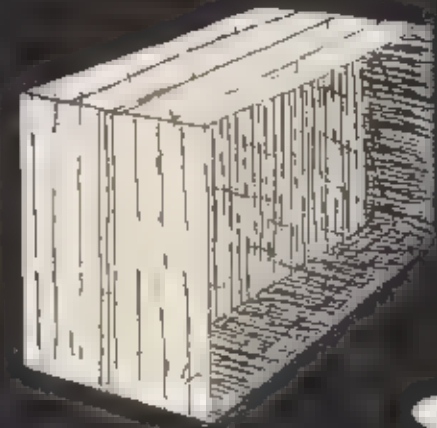
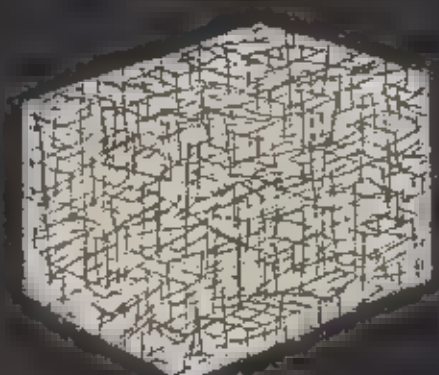
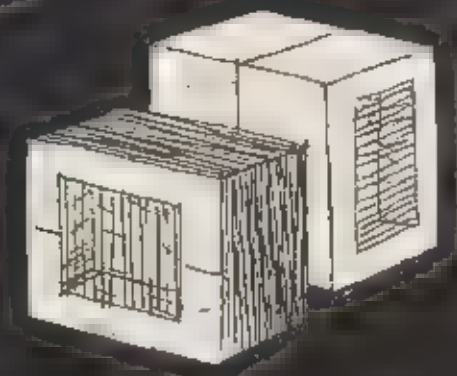
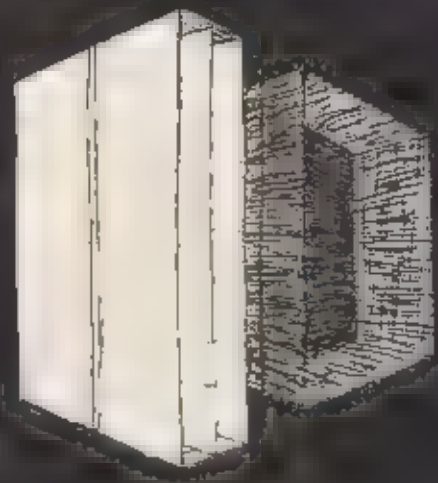
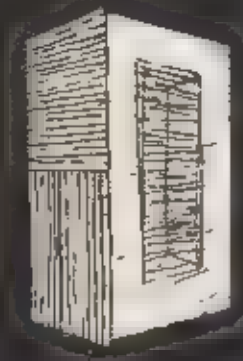
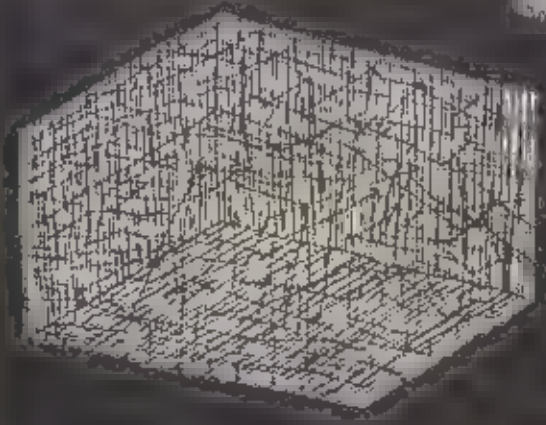
Marc: I'm working towards having exhibitions. Last year I received what is called a "Start Stipendium" (Stipend) from the Dutch government. The Start Stipendium provides financial support to recent art school



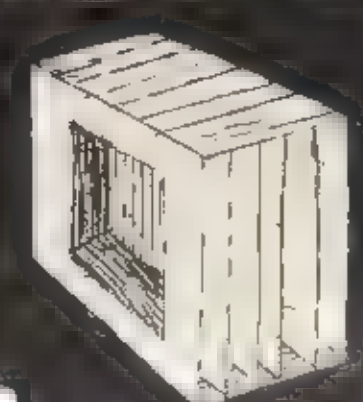
Nagtzaam

OUTSIDE WORLDS / LES PETITES COLLECTIONS

(GOLDEN YEARS)



FRAMED WORLDS
LIKE A WALL
AROUND YOU.



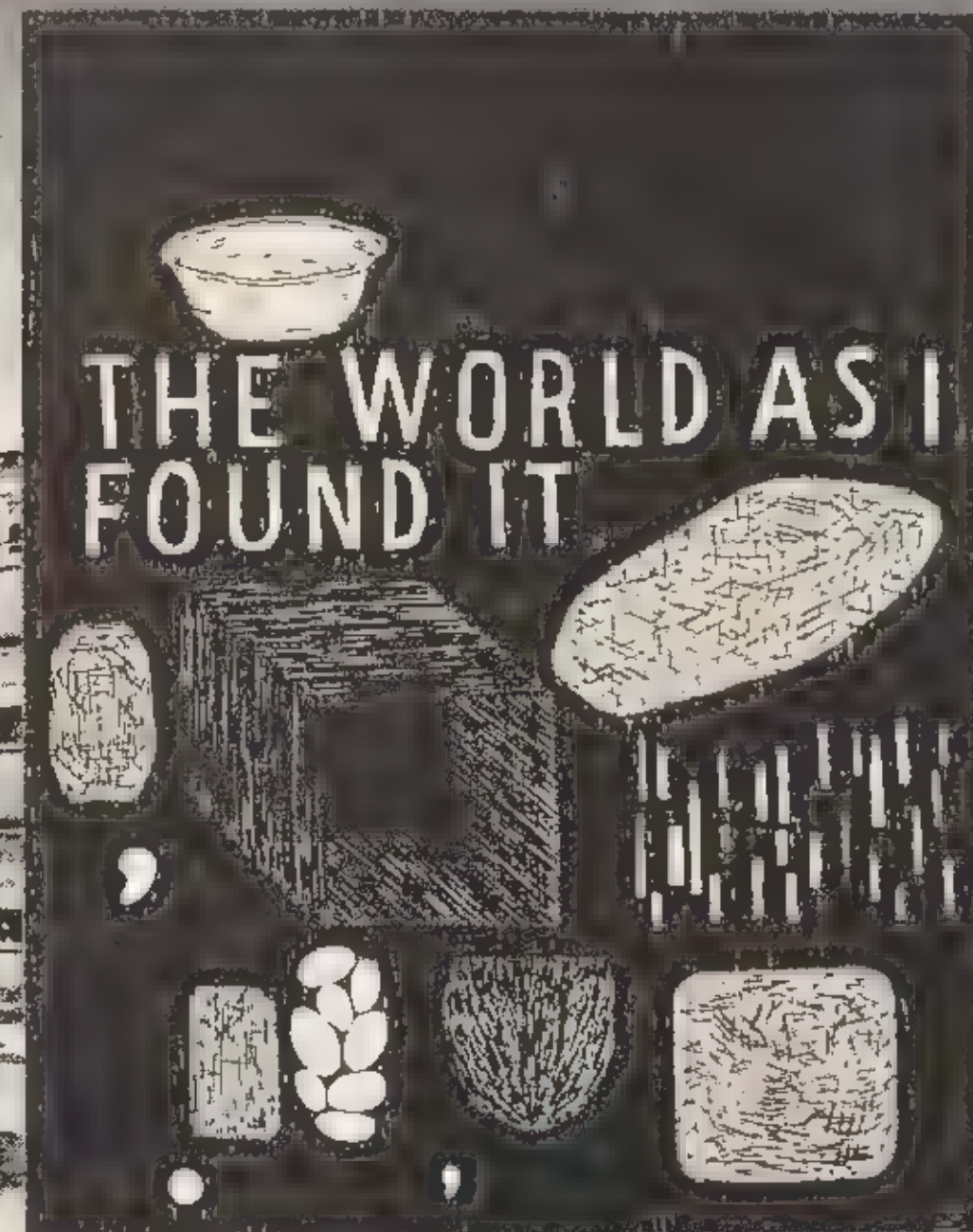
(THE PARALLEL UNIVERSE OUTSIDE OF ME /
THE PAINTER WORLD)

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9. PLYWOOD BOXES

9TH YEAR / 2011



graduates, allowing them to concentrate on creating work for a full year without having to worry about money. I realize this must sound quite unbelievable to American artists.

Emigre: Something like the *Contra Prestatie* (a Dutch social welfare program specifically for artists that was discontinued about ten years ago).

Marc: Yes, except there, the acceptance level was quite low, and people realize now that the *Contra Prestatie* generated a lot of mediocre art. They've raised that level quite a bit since there is much less money available for the arts nowadays.

Emigre: Earlier you mentioned that for you, the work becomes more real or more relevant when people see it. Would it be fair to say that if those people feel inclined to buy it the work becomes even more relevant?

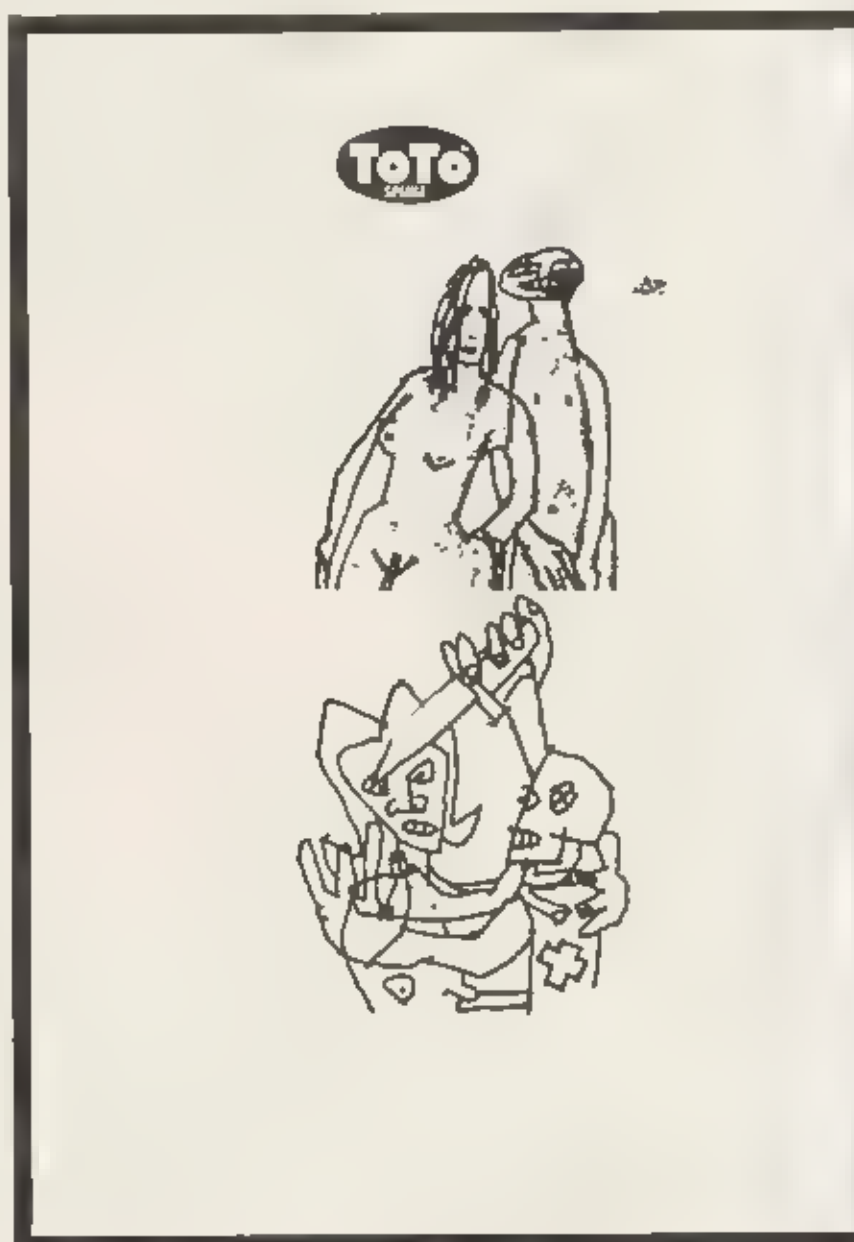
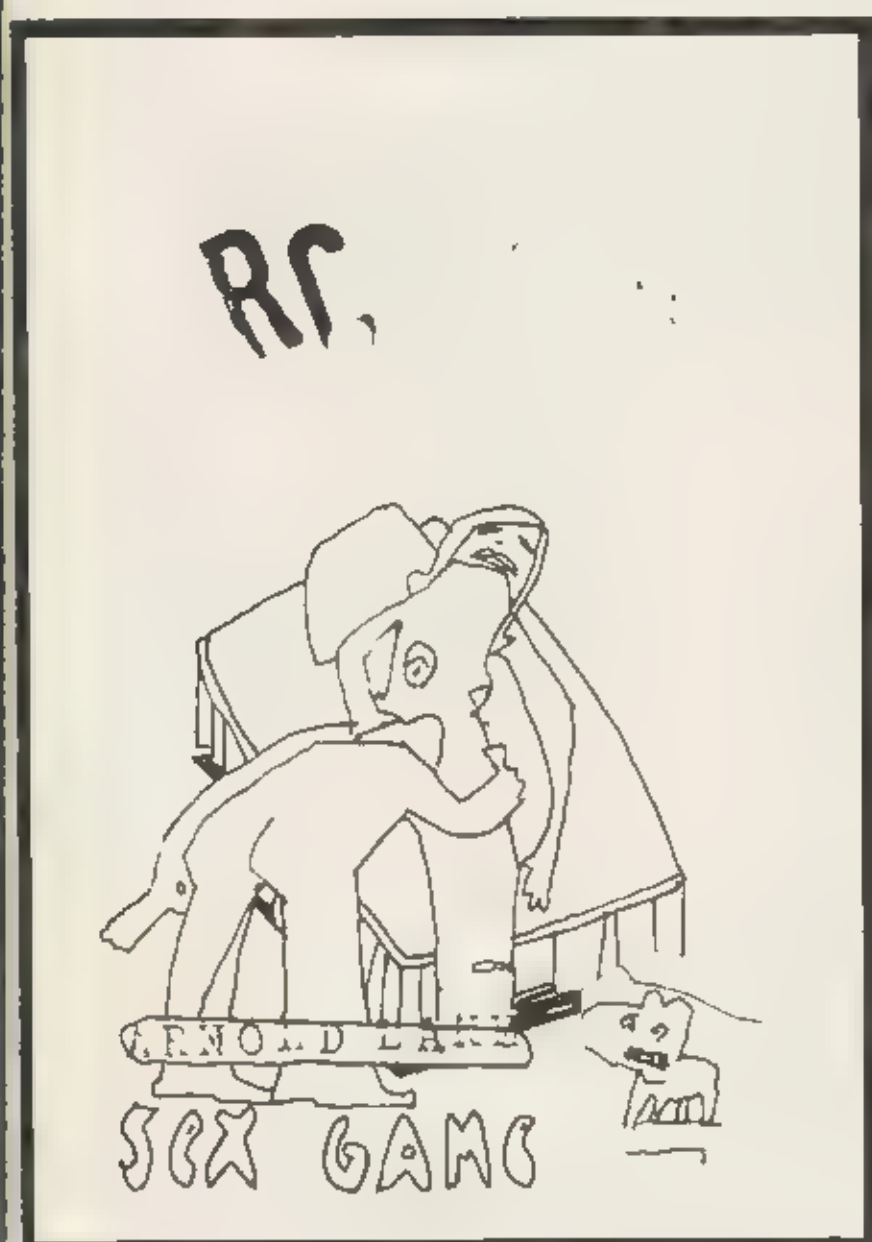
Marc: It's pleasant when people buy your work but it says little about quality. That line of reasoning would indicate that the best paid graphic designer would also create the best work, which we all know is not the case. When art and commerce meet, art always loses. In the eighties, a lot of artists were able to sell their work at extraordinary prices. Now, their work isn't that valuable anymore and some of those artists turned out to be merely trendy.

Emigre: How do we determine what is good and what is bad art if money cannot be used as a measuring stick? What are the more important criteria?

Marc: I hate to see our discussion go in this direction. Don't get me wrong; I'd love to earn huge amounts of money with my work, I'm sure everybody would. And it's entirely possible that I'll come to find out that I can't earn a penny with my work and that my work will remain nationally and internationally unimportant or uninteresting. If I found out that my ideas didn't appeal to people, I imagine I'd soon lose interest myself.

Emigre: That's not the case with you, though.

Marc: No. Since my graduation I've been regularly invited to do exhibitions. That



Above
Illustrations from
Some drawings by s. marc, 1989-1990
(Zanzibar no. 53)

Following page
From *Tijdschrift* nummer 1, February, 1994
Illustrations by Marc Nagtzaam
Black spots by Piet Vloemans

and the stipend has given me access to new channels. The relevance of one's work within society is to some extent measured by these stipends and grants. Whether the work sells is far less important.

October 4 (Berkeley/Breda)

Emigre: What motivates you most to do what you do?

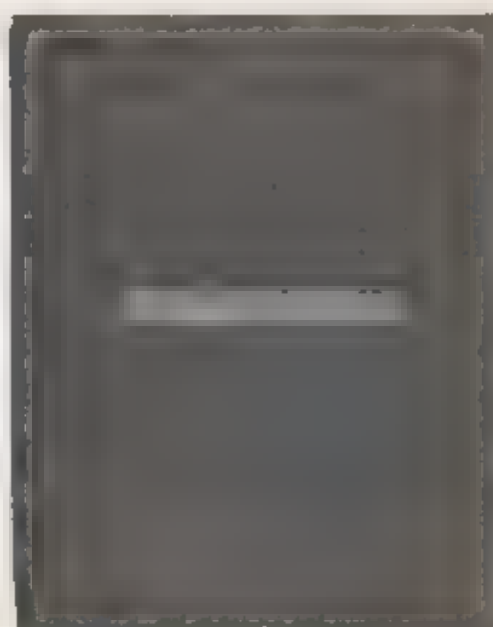
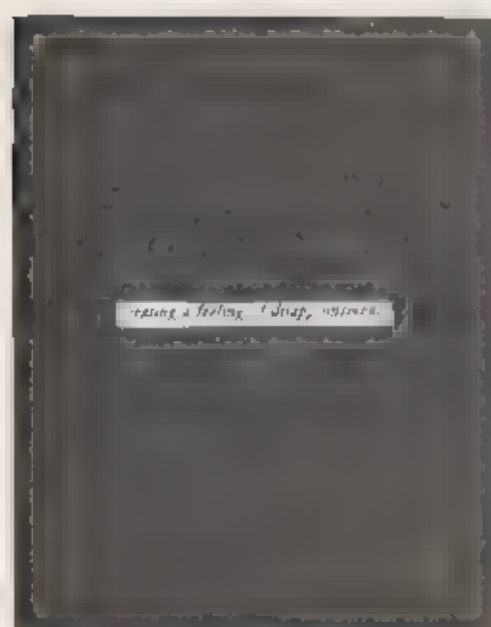
Marc: The reason why I do what I do is no different from why a plumber does plumbing. It's a profession I enjoy doing and it establishes me as an individual. And like a plumber, my work exists as only a tiny entity in a huge world.

Emigre: Is that frustrating?

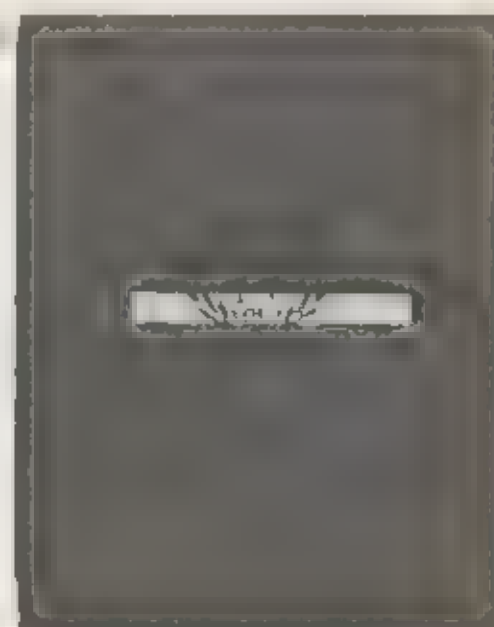
Marc: Not really. In a way, I'm working within a rather closed off world within which I hope to reach people who enjoy what I do.

Emigre: If the opportunity existed, would you mind seeing your work distributed to hundreds of thousands of people?

Marc: Absolutely not. I don't despise the public. I like to communicate with as many people as possible, but I probably don't do enough to realize that goal.



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Emigre: Why not?

Marc: I don't know. It bothers me, though, because I realize that eventually, if my public doesn't grow, I'll just be preaching to the converted, talking to the same 1000 people, and that's playing it safe. I think it would be a tremendous challenge, for instance, to make a movie that would be enjoyed by ten million people. But at this point, my ambitions are about my work, not about how big my audience is.

Emigre: How do you keep your work so loose and spontaneous?

Marc: It's interesting you ask that, because I just read the *Mouthpiece* issue [Emigre #35], where someone wished to write as a painter and stated how painting was associated with spontaneity. But it's not that simple. As an artist you're voluntarily locked up and isolated by your own restrictions and demands that you set in your work. And it's curious, because I see certain pages of Emigre to be liberating, to be lacking rigidity. When I look at Ed Fella's work, for instance, it looks so unrestricted. I could never afford such freedom in my own work, although I would like to.

Emigre: What do you mean, you can't afford it?

Marc: I can't afford it because I have no reason to work so freely. It takes a lot of effort and consideration to make my work as it is. Creating it is anything but spontaneous.

Continued

Previous two pages
From *Tijdschrift* nummer 1, February, 1994
Illustrations by Marc Nagtzaam
Black spots by Piet Vloemans

Right
Two spreads from
1967-1973
Prod. no. 25
Zanzibar Press
by Marc Nagtzaam

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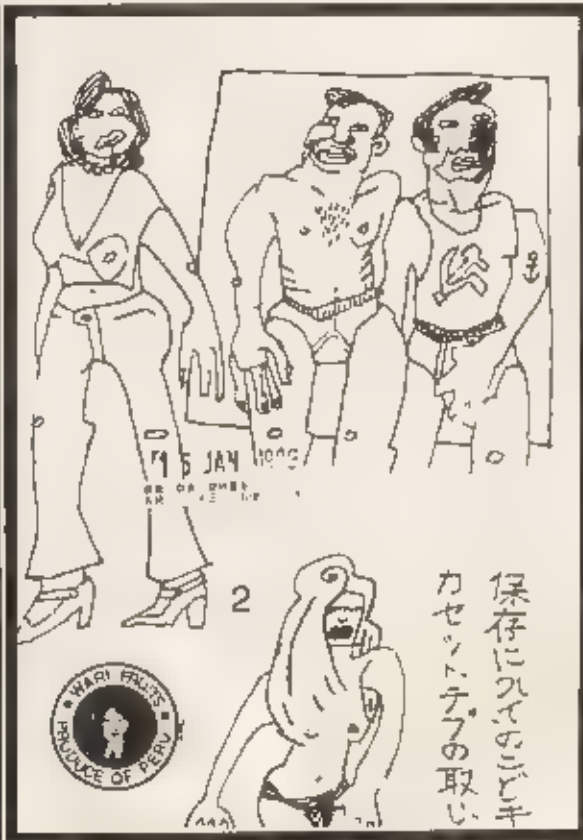
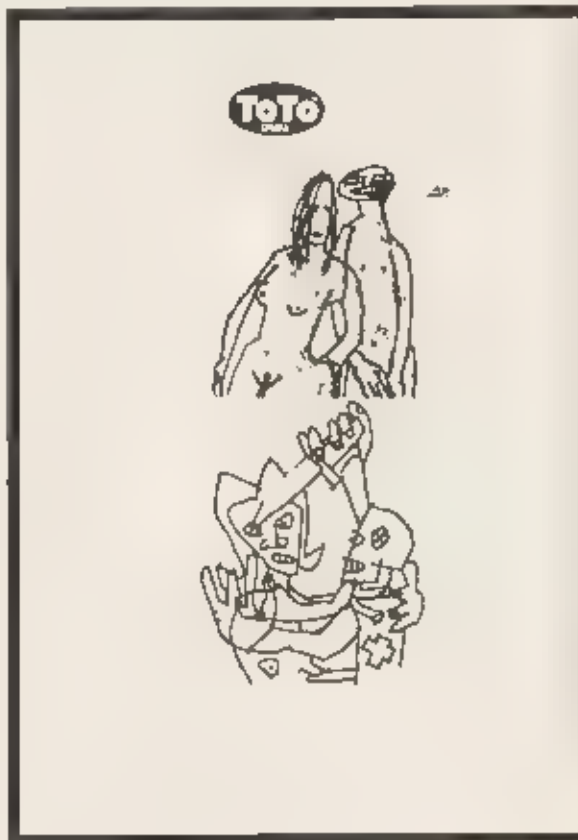
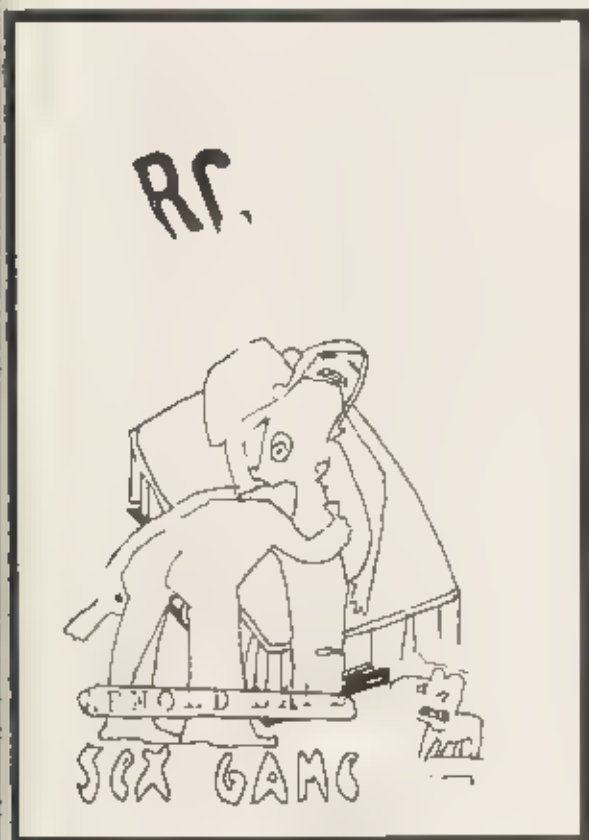
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FOR REAL



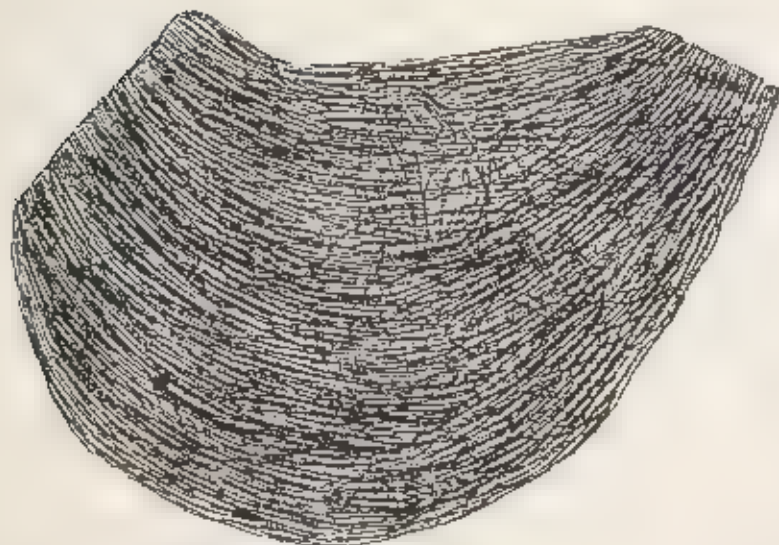
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POUR DCHX



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ANOTHER, YET SOME POSITION NEVER AGAIN
JUST ONCE - TAKE TWICE
THE SHIP
-YELLS



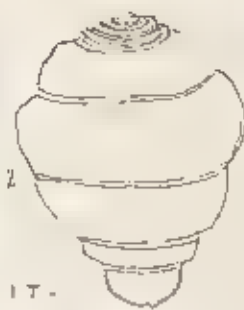
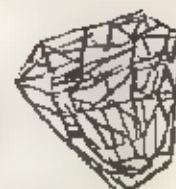
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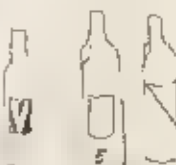
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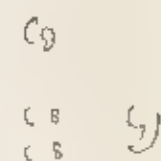
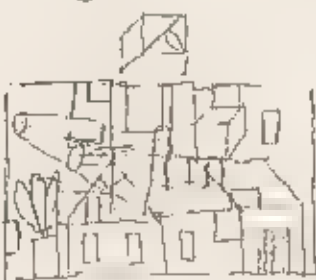
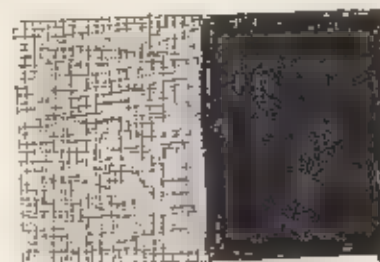
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WE SOLD IT.
(THE CLASSIC JOKE)
& IT WAS PRICELESS



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THE CHANGING

Emigre: *I would definitely file your work in the same category as Ed Fella's, though.*

Marc: *But I instinctively set all sorts of limits and parameters that are difficult to cross. It's a constant battle; at times I tell myself to go all out and the next moment I need to define things very specifically.*

Emigre: *Do you feel you have certain social responsibilities as an artist?*

Marc: *Yes. I feel that in this society, which is so obsessed with functionality, that it is sometimes important to make things that have no clear function and for which there is no demand. I don't believe in politically involved art, art that offers solutions, or art that holds up a mirror showing us what a terrible place the world is. I'm more interested in showing people that there is room to breathe, that there is space, a gap that people can fill in accordingly.*

Emigre: *Can you help resolve the world's problems with art?*

Marc: *No, I don't think so. Reality usually quickly passes politically involved art by. The big museums, which are of course very safe environments, might be showing shocking art, but the moment you set foot outside, you find a reality that's ten times as shocking. You can't make up that kind of reality; it hits you like a ton of bricks. That's the problem I have with photographers like Larry Clark, who documents the underbelly of teenage culture, and the Japanese photographer Araki, who fills three rolls of film a day with Japanese prostitutes and tied up young girls and his explicit erotic obsessions. Although there's something intriguing about their work, the moment it's up in a museum it feels much safer and a huge distance is created between reality and what you see in the photographs.*

Emigre: *That's kind of a trap. One criterion of doing art, as you yourself stated, is to share your work with others by putting it up in galleries and museums. But the moment it gets there, it loses its real power. That's a kind of catch 22. How can you resolve that as an artist?*

Marc: *Perhaps there are other channels. Christian Boltanski did something recently that I found amazing. After World War II, a lot of German kids disappeared and he printed up photographs of them with a small message stating that these kids were trying to find their families. He then handed these out to people at the railway station in Munich.*

Emigre: *Is that art, though? How is that different from putting the pictures of missing children on milk cartons as they do here in America?*

Marc: *It's art because Boltanski is an artist. The art itself does not have a quality in and of itself. Only when you view it in its particular context can you discuss whether it's good or bad or whether it's art at all. After Duchamp, the possibility of expressing your ideas through other media than painting or sculpture became legitimate. It's only natural for artists to continue to ex-*

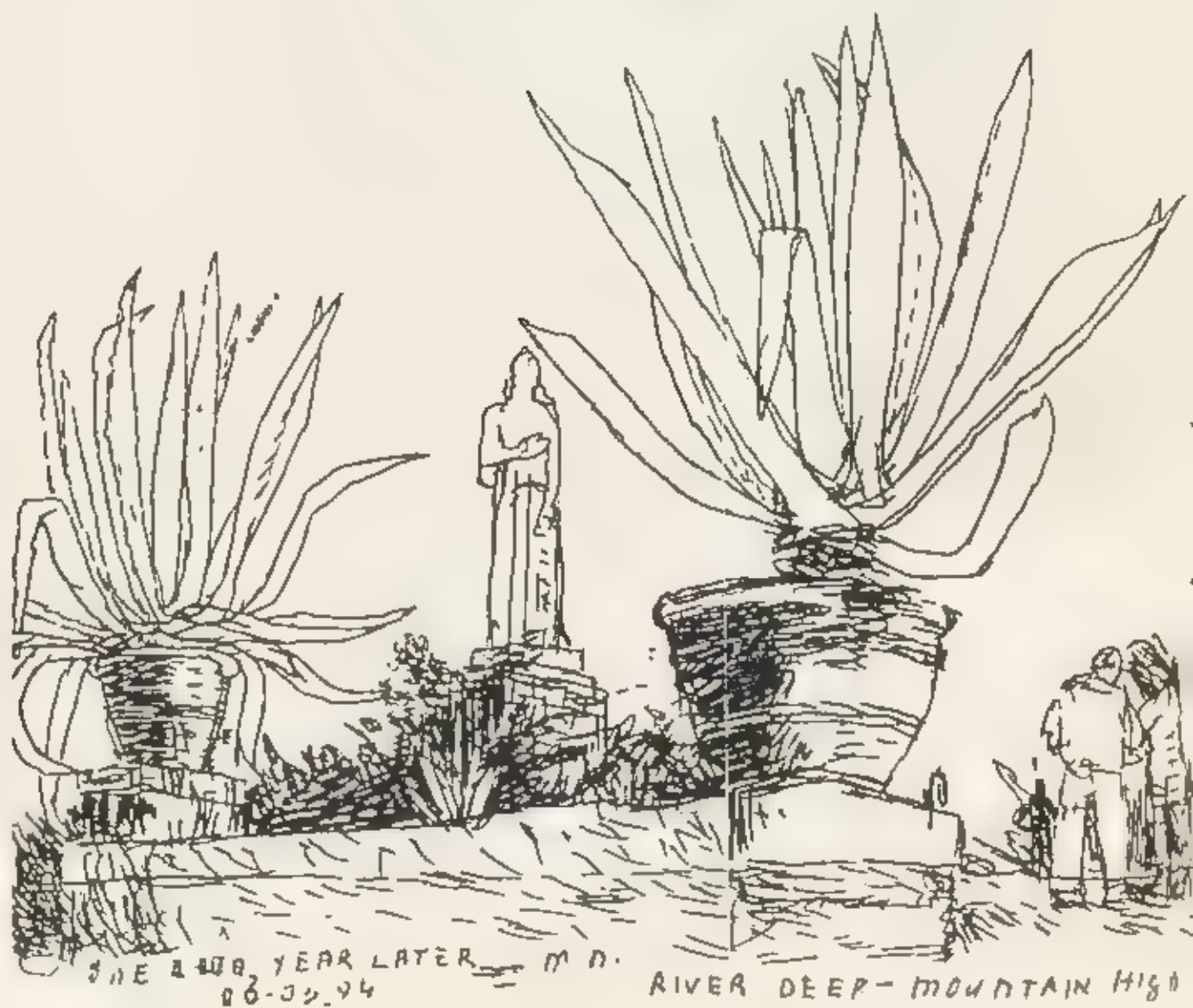
Below

From *Tijdschrift* nummer 2,
April, 1994

Illustrations by Marc Nagtzaam



cont



Following four pages
From *Tijdschrift* nummer 2, April, 1994
Illustrations by Marc Nagtzaam, Jan
Schaerlackens and Pet Vloemans

THE 400 YEAR LATER M.N.
86-02-94

RIVER DEEP - MOUNTAIN HIGH



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Marc: But I instinctively set all sorts of limits and parameters that are difficult to cross. It's a constant battle; at times I tell myself to go all out and the next moment I need to define things very specifically.

Emigre: *Do you feel you have certain social responsibilities as an artist?*

Marc: Yes. I feel that in this society, which is so obsessed with functionality, that it is sometimes important to make things that have no clear function and for which there is no demand. I don't believe in politically involved art, art that offers solutions, or art that holds up a mirror showing us what a terrible place the world is. I'm more interested in showing people that there is room to breathe, that there is space, a gap that people can fill in accordingly.

Emigre: *Can you help resolve the world's problems with art?*

Marc: No, I don't think so. Reality usually quickly passes politically involved art by. The big museums, which are of course very safe environments, might be showing shocking art, but the moment you set foot outside, you find a reality that's ten times as shocking. You can't make up that kind of reality; it hits you like a ton of bricks. That's the problem I have with photographers like Larry Clark, who documents the underbelly of teenage culture, and the Japanese photographer Araki, who fills three rolls of film a day with Japanese prostitutes and tied up young girls and his explicit erotic obsessions. Although there's something intriguing about their work, the moment it's up in a museum it feels much safer and a huge distance is created between reality and what you see in the photographs.

Emigre: *That's kind of a trap. One criterion of doing art, as you yourself stated, is to share your work with others by putting it up in galleries and museums. But the moment it gets there, it loses its real power. That's a kind of catch 22. How can you resolve that as an artist?*

Marc: Perhaps there are other channels. Christian Boltanski did something recently that I found amazing. After World War II, a lot of German kids disappeared and he printed up photographs of them with a small message stating that these kids were trying to find their families. He then handed these out to people at the railway station in Munich.

Emigre: *Is that art, though? How is that different from putting the pictures of missing children on milk cartons as they do here in America?*

Marc: It's art because Boltanski is an artist. The art itself does not have a quality in and of itself. Only when you view it in its particular context can you discuss whether it's good or bad or whether it's art at all. After Duchamp, the possibility of expressing your ideas through other media than painting or sculpture became legitimate. It's only natural for artists to continue to ex-

Below

From *Tijdschrift* nummer 2

April, 1994

Illustrations by Marc Nagtzaam



Following four pages
From *Tijdschrift* nummer 2 April, 1994
Illustrations by Marc Nagtzaam, Jan
Schaeferlakens and Piet Vlaemans

3 F R A G R A N C E . T H
I S W O R L D I T
S H O W S . P E R F E C
T L Y . W I T H S E N
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periment with different media to realize their work, which is what Boltanski did with that particular project.

Emigre: *Why do you use so much English in your work?*

Marc: My source material is mostly English. The music I listen to, the magazines I read, they're all in English. And there's no reason to translate these snippets into Dutch. I use English also because it creates a distance. English is still somewhat abstract for me. Some of these words are so novel, so fresh, while to Americans they must seem quite mundane and uninteresting.

Emigre: *Where did the ideas for names such as "Zanzibar Press" and "Editions Estelle" and the emphasis on cities like Paris or Santa Cruz in your work come from?*

Marc: All those places and publisher names and dates allowed me to create some distance between me and my work. To a small extent this had to do with my self-confidence, or lack thereof. If my name didn't appear on it, I couldn't be held responsible. And for people to understand the work it was not important to know that I had made these things. I also liked the idea of predating. I've used the years 1967 and 1973 to date some of my work. Those are dates that have long since past. The work obviously was never published in those years. I once saw this done on an album cover and I found it fascinating that people wanted to believe that the product was created in that period. I'm often searching for places or words that are loaded with suggestions. In my early projects I often used a photograph of an apartment building. It's part of the many found objects and pictures that I work with. This picture was on the back of a postage stamp that was cut out of a postcard from Spain. The image was particularly mysterious because inside the apartment many things could be going on. My publishing company could possibly have its office there.

Emigre: *That was exactly what I thought when I first saw it.*

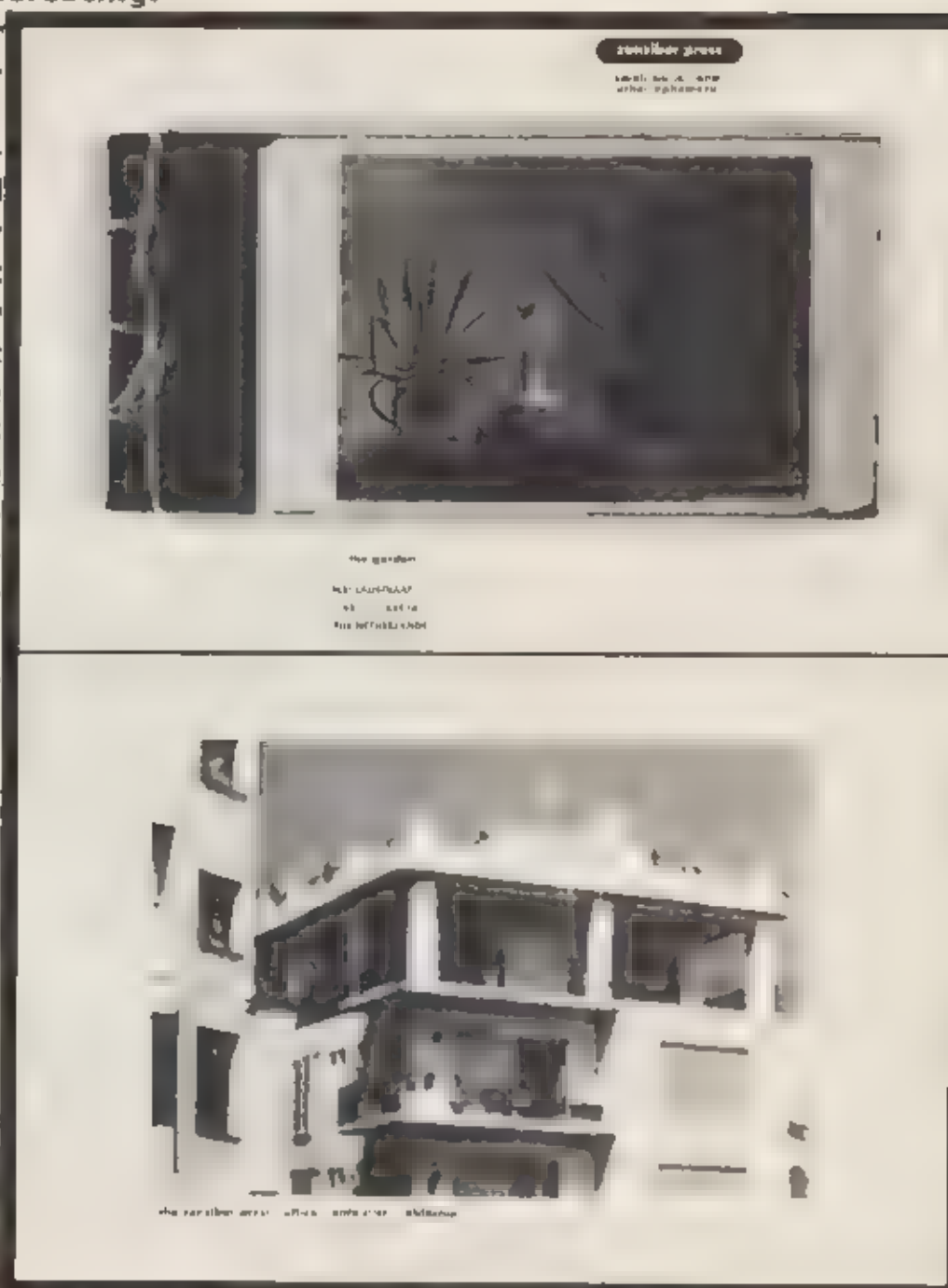
Marc: "Angel food," too. I didn't know what that could be. What would that look like? But it was a beautiful name that could function to designate an entire range of work. And then, of course, it becomes very specific. The Linda Lovelace mailings, too, were an excuse to do certain things under a pseudonym. And the movie "Deep Throat," which featured Linda Lovelace, was from 1973, a year I was using a lot in my work.

Emigre: *Those particular projects you created by yourself. Later, with the magazine, you started to collaborate.*

Marc: Yes, and in particular with Piet Vloemans. Together we decided to invite different artists to work with to push ourselves in new directions. We're only now starting to figure out how this works best. The second issue was a bit uncertain in that respect; we weren't quite adept in using that formula.

Emigre: *You weren't satisfied with that second issue? Why?*

Marc: In the second issue there were some page spreads with a particular logic of combinations of forms and drawings that worked. But as a whole, the maga-



Above
Flyer for Zanzibar Press
(front and back) depicting the
cover of the book *The Garden*
and the Zanzibar Press office
in Santa Cruz, California,
June, 1991

Nagtzaam

Previous two pages
From *Zanzibar Press 1967-1992 Guide*
Général, a "book in honor of an exhibition
which never took place. Published by
Editions Estelle in Paris, also made up."
Marc Nagtzaam, February, 1992.

五十年來





ZANZIBAR PRESS, BOOKS AND EMPHEMERA

a selection of printed matter from 1990 - 1992

5. arnold lane stamp booklet. some handmade rubber stamps.
10 copies 11 july 1990
8. stampbooklet no. 2 only two copies okt 1990
10. sugerbag with stamp. 4 copies 3 nov 1990
11. small piece from a painting. acryl on postcard with stamps.
26 copies, four editions to date 2 dec - 7 april 1991
12. fuck that shit. postcard with stamps. 23 copies 6 jan 1991
13. dark blue painting and postcard. 3 copies 12 jan 1991
15. this is the diary of... booklet wrapped in pink see through
paper with envelope. 23 copies feb 1991
16. you are special. large postcard, letterpress and lino-print.
33 copies 11 march 1991
17. a collection of stamps. vol. 3 spring 1974. 7 copies
4 editions to date. 23 march 1991.
19. yes, i am yours. postcard with letterpress, colourxerox and
real hair. 33 copies 28 april 1991.
21. the garden. a picture of one our books. 1500 copies
22. zanzibar press. card with two colour pictures
also 1500 copies and printed on may the 82 th 1991
23. sorry, we are on holiday. double sided xerox with envelope
22 copies 10 july 1991
24. yours truly. xerox on airmail paper with stamps
20 copies 29 sept 1991
25. 1967 - 1973. booklet 28 pages offset, letterpress and
lino-print. 14 copies 7 okt 1991. for sale at fl 35.-
26. substance. sheet with messages and pictures letterpress
62 copies 5 nov 1991
27. i want yours now. handmade postcard 13 copies dec 1991
28. space is the place. a personal note to our friends. 23 copies
10 feb 1992
29. not titled. booklet with drawings from various artists.
75 copies july - april 1992

all items ~~must be~~ ~~waiting~~ ~~people~~ and are sold out.

zine was too discombobulated, while the other issues were more unified.

I wish I could have been present when you discussed that. I have a hard time distinguishing which one is more successful.

We felt it wasn't articulate enough. Too many different things going on.

How was that first issue created? Is it all collaged together?

Yes, it was made out of existing drawings that were all xeroxed and then collaged together in a rather spontaneous way over a period of about two days. We wanted it to be very loose and funny, with a sincere attitude and without the presence of heavy-handed manifestoes, etc.

Issue 3 is almost the exact opposite. It seems obsessive and the entire issue reads like a critique on our materialistic society.

This was created with Noor de Rooy, whose husband is an avid collector. This got us started looking at each others collections and made us consider what people in general collect around themselves, looking at the stuff people own. We just started drawing everything around us.

What kind of reactions do you receive in response to the magazines?

I'm always surprised how closely and critically people follow it. People consider it a nice gift even though they pay for it.

The problem I have with asking you these questions about your work is that on the one hand, I'm really eager to find out what it all means, while on the other hand I'm worried you might tell me things I don't want to know because your work inspires such interesting thoughts in my mind. Is it important for you to know how people interpret your work?

I try to avoid putting any obvious meaning in my work. When you do this, you run the risk that people will explain your work as superficial. But it's not that I want to create unclear or cryptic work and I don't think I do. I make very specific choices in material, paper, typeface, etc., but I don't want you to be able to recognize that immediately. I don't want you to be able to recognize what my considerations were, because then it all becomes a game. And a lot of my considerations are not important at all. If people interpret it in different ways, that's the consequence I will have to accept and have to deal with. There is a record label called "Warp" for which The Designers Republic has designed many covers. Warp releases music by bands like Autechre and you never know what these musicians are after. There's an abstraction in their music, something unrecognizable. Again, it's not superficial; you can tell by the attention to detail and precision. And even though it might appear muddled or unclear, it is extremely consistent. And that really appeals to me to a point where I'm trying to accomplish that within my own work. I like to create work that you can understand simply by looking at the work itself, as opposed to postmodern work, where you have to know all the styles and philosophies that it references and quotes to fully understand it. What I don't like about some of my earlier work is that sometimes it drowned in the romanticism of stamps and numbers and place names. I needed all these things to get my point across. On hindsight, that's not very good. It's okay to start off with a lot, but then you need to start editing until you end up with perhaps only one or two words.

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March 1995
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E POEM

TAMPA BAY DIRT B

Re-cognize both the fruit and the furniture—

The E,
silent no more, pits chord against chord and
the designer plucks this inner flute against our
will, and touches that imaginary
sweet spot between the trachea and
the breath-vapor, language's home—
The reeds inside this instrument vibrate against
each other and now like a desert vision this
little red treat will quench.

DANIEL X. O'NEIL

In the ongoing debate about readability and legibility, the argument is repeatedly made that in order to communicate effectively, a neutral or traditional approach to text typography is preferable. Out of respect to both reader and writer, the designer's function in regard to text treatments should, therefore, be purely subservient. Besides the fact that the debate rarely specifies the application, it is also based on the assumption that all writers think alike, preferring their sacred words to be treated traditionally to the exclusion of all other typographic treatments.

The poet Daniel X. O'Neil adds an intriguing dimension to the debate. While I'm certain he considers his writing to be as important as any writer's, O'Neil sees the designer's role as one that can add emotion or expression to writing in a way that his words cannot.

In addition, as an entrepreneur, O'Neil offers something fresh, as well. In a country that increasingly abandons and devalues artists and their art, O'Neil might well be the artist of the future. Equal parts artist/entrepreneur, his go-getter, bottom-line attitude has provided him with both a realistic outlook on what it takes to be an artist, as well as fertile ground for inspiration. Where some suggest that our capitalist society allows but one liberty, namely the freedom to consume, O'Neil recognizes the system as a platform that offers individuals the freedom to create.

»RVDL«

For Patrick Dorey, Road Manager

When the Bad Grandma died
Jimmy got the double-wide
and the Tampa Bay Dirt Bike King

screen door slaps behind him

got the yellow "Art Daniels Realty

he tried to cry but couldn't

Emigre I believe Stephen Farrell is the luckiest designer in the world to be able to work with two writer/poets who are both so appreciative of graphic design, Steve Tomasula and you. You actually mention designers in one of your poems. How did this appreciation for design develop?

O'Neil There's one reason: my brother Patrick O'Neil, who is a great designer. He went to college at UIC here in Chicago, as did a lot of my other designer friends. UIC is the kind of program that cranks out the hard-core, solid, production type of designers. It's not a very froufrou school. They roll up their sleeves and get the job done. When he was going through his first year in the design program, we were knocking heads quite a bit on the issues of graphic design. He came home every night telling me what he had studied, and at the time, I questioned even the need for design. I thought designers were just making things different instead of making things better in a graphic sense. That was our seminal argument.

Emigre That was a good argument.

O'Neil Yes. Here you are; you're trained to apply certain graphic standards, you understand certain things about type and color and image, but all you're doing is making printed matter different than it would have been had it been done by someone who was not trained. Well, he came at me with all the basic tenets of design and he laid down the foundation, which was that if you pay attention as a designer to your subject matter and the person or entity behind it, you'll be able to figure it out. Clients don't understand that their graphic design does not need to make them comfortable. People misunderstand the role of graphic design. It's not about spitting out at you that which you're ready to receive; it's about giving you what you need in a graphic sense.

Emigre There exists a belief that words are indeterminate and that the meaning of words and language in general is somewhat ambiguous, and the same has been said about the meaning of images and typefaces. With the designers you use and the way that they work, you are stacking one ambiguous method of communication right on top of another one. Aren't you concerned this might create confusing messages? Or do you think the designs generally enhance and clarify your writing and even, as you put it, address a need that the public might have?

O'Neil Good writing is never ambiguous. And I don't mean that it always makes sense. But it's never ambiguous. It always is something.

Emigre But it can mean different things to different people.

O'Neil Yes, except that certain groups or subgroups of people come together and agree that certain words mean certain things in certain contexts. It really comes down to living in the present moment and not getting caught up in different

Emigre

O'Neil

Emigre
O'Neil

Emigre

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(2nd panel) Cover/envelope *Tijdschrift* no 5
March 1995
Illustrations by Marc Nagtzaam
and Piet Vloemans

攝影濟

W, nod gen u jil voor de presentatie van tijdschrift nummer 5 in lokaal 01 op 31 maart a.s. 20.00 uur
u ontving tot op heden enkele tijdschriftennummers als u het tijdschrift wilt blijven ontvangen kunt u
een abonnement nemen door hilt 50 over te maken op gironummer 6390740 (a.v.m. nagizaam te
breda u ontvangt dan de nummers 5, 6, 7 en 8

lokaal 01 kloosterlaan 128 breda correspondentieadres st. jansstraat 33 4811 zk breda

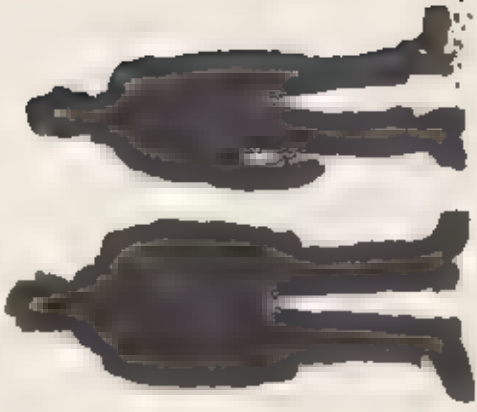
Tijdschrift N° 5 maart 1995

Eenmalige oplage van 100 exemplaren.

Deze uitgave is een samenwerking van

Wim Mabeen, Marc Nagizaam
Het Doemenis en is op de plannen van het Duvelhof
E. Telburg gebaseerd van de steen.

Dit nummer wordt gepresenteerd
in lokaal 01, Kloosterlaan 128, Breda
vrijdag 31 maart 21.00 uur.



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sinds februari 1994 zijn 5 nummers verschenen aan ieder nummer werkt een andere gast kunstenaar
mee het tijdschrift wordt per post verstuurd en is daarmee een direkte presentatie die anders eigen
omgeving deze zijn bevind en meerdere presentaties kunnen naast elkaar gelegd worden er ligt
geen te voren bepaald model vast ieder nummer is een nieuw voorstel omtrent vorm en inhoud
zodoende is ieder nummer uniek en krijgt het zijn betekenis binnen de serie

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adres is: St. Jansstraat 33 4811 ZK Breda
your always

ON THE SAME DAY IKE KING

" ashtray with the holly girl on it.

levels of meaning, but instead, taking a document or a piece of printed matter quite literally at face value. What it says, it is. If it's made up of letters and punctuation, that's it. The last line in one of my poems is "we can pet and make that grow." I like that line simply because it's one two-letter word, three three-letter words and three four-letter words in a row. That's a blow away! I focus on the physical nature of words. I find comfort in them. That way you don't get all wrapped up in the whole circuitous meaning issue. I take language and vocabulary for what they are, which are tools of understanding.

In regard to design, though, I agree with your earlier argument, that most design we see around us accomplishes no more than making something different.

Of course the best design makes things what they must be. And that's why poetry goes so well with design. People love to bring in a poet, they want poetry with music, poetry with art, poetry on the Internet, while design is poetry in its element. Poetry with design applied to it is poetry with nothing applied to it. Poetry design is giving the poetry what the poetry is. It's not something placed upon the surface of the art. It's something that helps the art be.

Are you involved in the design?

Very much so. With *Memo To All Employees*, the latest release from Juggernaut, we started off by faxing pages back and forth between me in Chicago and Jonny Stepping of Sterling Stepping Design in Palo Alto, California. He has designed both of my books. The poems come ready-made in a lot of ways: they are set in stanzas, they have discrete line breaks, letters are set in upper and lower case, they appear in a certain order. People like e.e. cummings and logden Nash have fought for the right of composition with these graphic elements. Editors used to take a poem and print it to fit, changing the line breaks and normalizing punctuation and other grammatical conventions. Once a designer understands these certain "rights" of the poet, it frees him to create new graphic ways to go against the grain or enhance meaning. Jonny really knows language and he pays attention to what words are. He chooses the typefaces and type styles and binding and material and creates the whole system of what the book looks like. I can trust him to do whatever he wants once I turn over a poem to him. A lot of times, he comes up with a visual punctuation innovation or an illustration that, as you said, adds another layer of meaning. At Juggernaut, we are creating the future of literature. We do for poetry what comics and graphic novels do for fiction. We use type and image to create a visual and emotional experience on the page.

On one of your Juggernaut Product Specification Sheets, you wrote that "In 1995 America, the center of society is the

Frederico Fellini's and River Phoenix's obituaries were printed on November One, 1993.

1. Try saying that w/o using the bottom of your upper front teeth as a striking pad for the lower lip.

2. On June Thirteenth, 1994, Mike Tyson was denied parole, Ryne Sandberg retired from Baseball, and OJ Simpson's ex-wife and another guy were found dead. The old ballpark will never be the same.

entertainment industry," and that toward that end you have launched an unending campaign to become the "Worldwide Entertainment Juggernaut of the 21st Century." Is poetry no more than entertainment?

O'Neil: No. It's not very entertaining at all and that's why I'm doing what I'm doing. I'm trying to make it entertainment. Poetry is the most intense form of literature. Poetry is just an experiment in finding out what these ciphers are, what these marks and lines and squiggles are. The other thing about poetry is that it lives on its own; it depends only on itself for existence. By making it entertainment, it places me as a poet and as a poetic figure into the center of our culture, which is where the poet belongs.

Emigre: Like the Trojan Horse.

O'Neil: Yes, but I'm not trying to trick people. My poetry is what I want it to be. When I write my raw stuff of poetry, I never think about how it is going to go over on stage, or whether Barnes and Noble is going to carry it.

Emigre: It would be useless to second-guess what an audience likes.

O'Neil: Right, because they're going to change their mind.

Emigre: Plus, they often don't know what they like until you present them with it.

O'Neil: Right. So you might as well be strong and give them what you want to give them. Poetry must be at the center of society. It's imperative. Once I accept that fact, I go and look at our society and ask "What is at the center of society?" It's the entertainment industry. That's our core. It's always been our core. Comedy, for instance; it's where we process everything. It's where we take everything that is scary and make it edible. Why do you think that every Sunday night there's at least one movie on TV whose theme can be summed up as "I want my baby back"? Because that affects people in an emotional way; people care about that. That's where I want to take poetry.

Emigre: In your Juggernaut Fact Sheet, you don't think too highly about your fellow poets and their work when you rail against "the dominant over-intellectual crap coming out of university and traditional presses." You think there's something missing in their work?

O'Neil: There are a lot of decent people making a living off of these presses, so I don't want to put a hex on them or spit on their graves, but they're just pumping out crap without any eye towards publishing important literature. They're just publishing their friends in the same old way with the same metaphors and cadences. Also, from a design perspective, it's a joke what comes out of the traditional press.

Emigre: This might be interpreted as you being bitter about not being their friend and not getting your work published.

O'Neil: That would be valid if I had ever tried. But I never tried. I just come at it from a totally different perspective. I got degrees in English and Anthropology from UIC and I never considered getting into post-graduate study or submitting dozens of manuscripts in search of some \$500 insult. The whole poetry publishing system is full of lapdogs and special treats. The whole thing's got maggots and worms crawling on the insides of it. I jumped right into doing it instead.

Emigre: I enjoyed your essay "Joint Venture" and completely agree with what you are trying to accomplish, but on a purely pragmatic level, how do you attain artistic and financial control within the commercial marketplace where poetry isn't exactly the hottest selling item?

O'Neil: Getting financial control is the easiest thing in the world. Getting financial security is a harder thing. Take the chapbook industry, for instance. The chapbook is a cheaply made, 8-1/2 x 11 folded in half, 20 to 25 page stapled collection of poetry. They have financial control. They know what it will cost to produce a chapbook, and they can afford it. That doesn't mean they have financial security, though, because usually they're not making any positive revenue. At Juggernaut, as a publisher of real books, we also have financial control because, to be Marxist about it, we control the means of production. We are also willing to take on debt. All you need to be a publisher is a writer, a designer, and the willingness to spend all your money on

Dear Emigre

I was going to write after *Emigre* #34 and say how much I'm enjoying the shift in emphasis that has been happening over the last couple of years in your pages, but that the naivete of the modernist (bad guys)/postmodernist (good guys) debate was getting really tiresome. This seemed to reach some kind of peak in Mr. Keedy's *ZOMBIE MODERNISM* essay, where modernism is aggressively attacked in a tone that resembles Clem G. and all those boys more than anyone else: the bullying, self-important tenor of his statements seems to betray more about [Keedy's] positioning than any professed "multiculturalism."

This seemed to point at my dissatisfaction: if the representatives of postmodernism advanced by *Emigre's* contributors (critics and defenders alike) shifted from being solely white men like Barthes, Foucault and Derrida to encompass bell hooks, Trinh T. Minh-ha and Donna Haraway I might feel like the discussion was going somewhere useful, and hopefully further from *apologia* for status quo capitalism like *RADICAL COMMODITIES* (sure, capitalism "has its privileges," but let's ask the Taiwanese who assemble our Macintoshes "first", ok?).

Then *Emigre* #35 arrived and its lyrical, questioning nature was highly seductive, but by the time I got to the letters section something still felt vaguely amiss. The content felt pretty, and, in a way, pretty safe - I liked it too much, something had to be wrong. Then I realized that behind the psychoanalytic investigations prompted by Cixous, Kristeva et al, lay no class or "materialist" analysis of design, which seemed strange for a profession where the overwhelming bulk of production occurs as part of an explicit financial contract. Then Denise Gonzales Crisp's *WAYS OF LOOKING CLOSER* soon closed my mouth. Can *Emigre* continue to provide space for this kind of critique? I hope so. For me, the cultural/economic politics that allow a postcard from Indonesia to be typeset in Template Gothic, or the inescapable iconography of the Coca-Cola can to be found in a Ugandan town are design issues, and our thoughts about design should be able to touch upon this.

But anyway, another issue of *Emigre*, and another inability to not purchase.

I tend not to like acquiring things much (I know someone who is very good at giving me beautiful objects, which I can accept "reluctantly," elude responsibility), attempting instead to also, like Andrew Blauvelt, "continue to be amazed at the way words resonate, whether a subway sign or a painting"; to feel tactility in looking at everything, "tracing the instep of (the) words" (Ian Iqbal Rashid) in even the most

prosaic typography; to look conversationally, dialogically, touch/be touched; to allow them inside but not to digest them, for them to remain outside as, well, themselves. But *Emigre* always wants me to "have" it around to converse with, enjoying its depth and its surfaces, continually satisfying (but then, finally, not), surprising (even months later), probing, provoking and questioning, not least my desire for this particular object/commodity whose lure I rarely resist.

Danny Butt, Dunedin, New Zealand

Dear Emigre,

In *ON TYPOGRAPHIC REFERENCE* (#36), and in other of his recent articles, Gérard Mermoz uses the term "new typography" to describe work of the last few years, as gathered, he suggests, in Rick Poynor's anthology *Typography Now*. Mermoz invites us to consider the irony whereby the legacy of the old "new typography" of Central Europe in the 1920s and 1930s is now turned against this new "new typography." Who is doing this turning? He provides a list of five names. We must assume that it is the two modernists here: Paul Rand and the ghost of Emil Ruder. It certainly isn't the ghosts of Stanley Morison and Beatrice Warde, who hated the old "new typography." My name is added to this list; despite the fact that I've been severely critical of the views of the other four (dirty formalists, all of them!).

I think that Gérard Mermoz would do well to drop his new use of the term "new typography." Let me try a pair of descriptions and a contrast.

The new typography can be precisely located in time and place. It starts with the socialist revolutions of 1917-19 in Russia and Central Europe, and ends with the rise of totalitarian regimes in those countries in the early 1930s. The movement of new typography was fueled by a social project - very often a Socialist one. It also embodied a new formal vision of abstraction, and was in part a response to the new technologies of the early part of the twentieth century. It had a utopian, universalizing vision. It was anti-individualistic, and against the cult of the designer. It was practical, and anti-academic. For evidence of all this, see Jan Tschichold's book, *Die Neue Typographie* (1928), which has recently appeared in an English-language edition (*The New Typography*, University of California Press, 1995).

The recent work that Gérard Mermoz wants also to call "new typography" is also a product of, and a response to, new technologies; the digital technologies. It rejects universal views, including the Socialist project. It tends to equate utopias and prison camps. It is a product of the years of

conservative hegemony in the Western world and of transnational corporate power. Where it has any social vision, it's a limited one of protest against this hegemony. But this protest is then in praise of the individual, without any broad constructive social hope. The cult of the designer doesn't worry it much; in fact, it has a cult of the designer-as-author. It has no unifying formal vision, least of all one of abstraction. It loves theory, and has grown up within the academy.

Mermoz himself catches the spirit of the new work in his closing sentences: "This approach would delay the process of judging in a peremptory manner, favoring the decentering of dialogic modes, through a plural writing of differing voices." Then why does he want to hang on to this singular, unifying, exclusionary term "new typography"? It can't just be that he wants to steal some legitimation and prestige? Shouldn't he rather be talking about "new typographies," to describe the truly various, mutually contradictory pieces shown in Rick Poynor's anthology?

To return to Gérard Mermoz's opening paragraph, and the infamous gang of Morison, Warde, Ruder, Rand and Kinross. He refers to our defense of "alleged" interests of readers. Most days I go to the local post office and queue there, waiting to pay for posting a large packet, or to buy stamps. In the queue I often read a newspaper or a novel (at the moment, it is Philip Roth's glorious *Zuckerman* trilogy). Sometimes, the people serving behind the counter turn to read the book of regulations. Pensioners and social service claimants read and fill in forms. Others have to deal with customs declarations and driving license applications. We look at posters on the walls about early posting for Christmas and National Savings certificates. The interests of all these readers are very real, and often pressing. There is no need to "allege" them. This is the ordinary world of reading. It seems to me that the new theory isn't much bothered by it.

Regards,

Robin Kinross, London, U.K.

Dear Robin Kinross,

From Stanley Morison's *Fundamental Principles of Typography* to Robin Kinross' *Fellow readers*, the ethical concern of typographers towards text, author and readers has revolved around the notion of legibility with the implication that authors and readers are best served - and the typographer's responsibility fulfilled - when the text is set in, if not a neutral, at least an unobtrusive way.

I wish to challenge this interpretation of legibility in terms of optical ergonomic, which reduces the notion of text to a mechanical

MIKE KING ON THE SAME DAY

"ashtray with the holly girl on it.

levels of meaning, but instead, taking a document or a piece of printed matter quite literally at face value. What it says, it is. If it's made up of letters and punctuation, that's it. The last line in one of my poems is "we can pet and make that grow." I like that line simply because it's one two-letter word, three three-letter words and three four-letter words in a row. That's a blow away! I focus on the physical nature of words. I find comfort in them. That way you don't get all wrapped up in the whole circuitous meaning issue. I take language and vocabulary for what they are, which are tools of understanding.

In regard to design, though, I agree with your earlier argument, that most design we see around us accomplishes no more than making something different.

Of course the best design makes things what they must be. And that's why poetry goes so well with design. People love to bring in a poet, they want poetry with music, poetry with art, poetry on the Internet, while design is poetry in its element. Poetry with design applied to it is poetry with nothing applied to it. Poetry design is giving the poetry what the poetry is. It's not something placed upon the surface of the art. It's something that helps the art be

Are you involved in the design?

Very much so. With *Memo To All Employees*, the latest release from Juggernaut, we started off by faxing pages back and forth between me in Chicago and Jonny Stepping of Sterling Stepping Design in Palo Alto, California. He has designed both of my books. The poems come pre-made in a lot of ways: they are set in stanzas, they have discrete line breaks, letters are set in upper and lower case, they appear in a certain order. People like e.e. cummings and Jigden Nash have fought for the right of composition with these graphic elements. Editors used to take a poem and print it to fit, changing the line breaks and normalizing punctuation and other grammatical conventions. Once a designer understands these certain "rights" of the poet, it frees him to create new graphic ways to go against the grain or enhance meaning. Jonny really knows language and he pays attention to what words are. He chooses the typefaces and type styles and binding and material and creates the whole system of what the book looks like. I can trust him to do whatever he wants once I turn over a poem to him. A lot of times, he comes up with a visual punctuation innovation or an illustration that, as you said, adds another layer of meaning. At Juggernaut, we are creating the future of literature. We do for poetry what comics and graphic novels do for fiction. We use type and image to create a visual and emotional experience on the page.

On one of your *Juggernaut Product Specification Sheets*, you wrote that "In 1995 America, the center of society is the

Frederico Fellini's and River Phoenix's obituaries were printed on November One, 1993.

1. Try saying that w/o using the bottom of your upper front teeth as a striking pad for the lower lip.

2. On June Thirteenth, 1994, Mike Tyson was denied parole, Ryne Sandberg retired from Baseball, and OJ Simpson's ex-wife and another guy were found dead. The old ballpark will never be the same.

entertainment industry," and that toward that end you have launched an unending campaign to become the "Worldwide Entertainment Juggernaut of the 21st Century." Is poetry no more than entertainment?

O'Neil: No. It's not very entertaining at all and that's why I'm doing what I'm doing. I'm trying to make it entertainment. Poetry is the most intense form of literature. Poetry is just an experiment in finding out what these ciphers are, what these marks and lines and squiggles are. The other thing about poetry is that it lives on its own; it depends only on itself for existence. By making it entertainment, it places me as a poet and as a poetic figure into the center of our culture, which is where the poet belongs.

Emigre: Like the Trojan Horse

O'Neil: Yes, but I'm not trying to trick people. My poetry is what I want it to be. When I write my raw stuff of poetry, I never think about how it is going to go over on stage, or whether Barnes and Noble is going to carry it.

Emigre: It would be useless to second-guess what an audience likes.

O'Neil: Right, because they're going to change their mind.

Emigre: Plus, they often don't know what they like until you present them with it.

O'Neil: Right. So you might as well be strong and give them what you want to give them. Poetry must be at the center of society. It's imperative. Once I accept that fact, I go and look at our society and ask "What is at the center of society?" It's the entertainment industry. That's our core. It's always been our core. Comedy, for instance; it's where we process everything. It's where we take everything that is scary and make it edible. Why do you think that every Sunday night there's at least one movie on TV whose theme can be summed up as "I want my baby back"? Because that affects people in an emotional way; people care about that. That's where I want to take poetry.

Emigre: In your *Juggernaut Fact Sheet*, you don't think too highly about your fellow poets and their work when you rail against "the dominant over-intellectual crap coming out of university and traditional presses." You think there's something missing in their work?

O'Neil: There are a lot of decent people making a living off of these presses, so I don't want to put a hex on them or spit on their graves, but they're just pumping out crap without any eye towards publishing important literature. They're just publishing their friends in the same old way with the same metaphors and cadences. Also, from a design perspective, it's a joke what comes out of the traditional press.

Emigre: This might be interpreted as you being bitter about not being their friend and not getting your work published.

O'Neil: That would be valid if I had ever tried. But I never tried. I just came at it from a totally different perspective. I got degrees in English and Anthropology from UIC and I never considered getting into post-graduate study or submitting dozens of manuscripts in search of some \$500 insult. The whole poetry publishing system is full of lapdogs and special treats. The whole thing's got maggots and worms crawling on the insides of it. I jumped right into doing it instead.

Emigre: I enjoyed your essay "Joint Venture" and completely agree with what you are trying to accomplish, but on a purely pragmatic level, how do you attain artistic and financial control within the commercial marketplace where poetry isn't exactly the hottest selling item?

O'Neil: Getting financial control is the easiest thing in the world. Getting financial security is a harder thing. Take the chapbook industry, for instance. The chapbook is a cheaply made, 8-1/2 x 11 folded in half, 20 to 25 page stapled collection of poetry. They have financial control. They know what it will cost to produce a chapbook, and they can afford it. That doesn't mean they have financial security, though, because usually they're not making any positive revenue. At Juggernaut, as a publisher of real books, we also have financial control because, to be Marxist about it, we control the means of production. We are also willing to take on debt. All you need to be a publisher is a writer, a designer, and the willingness to spend all your money on

LONELY ASCAP* INVESTIGATOR #354 FALLS IN LOVE AGAIN

He used to meet the most beautiful women
because he was an odd figure
who drew cuts with his eye directions,
seeming like he had a photographic memory for the
notes in his head. Everything came out in smooth phrases
like there was a scroll up there
and he knew he would tell it to the judge some day:

**'Born to Run' judge by Bruce Springsteen was performed publicly at
The Roundup in Norman, Oklahoma on July 8, 1998 at 9:17 pm.**



Cover
Nemo To All
Employees
designed by
Janney
Stepping
1995

printing. The act of publishing is
the act of printing. Sure, you have
to market and promote and
distribute and there's a lot of
activities that go along with being
a publisher, but the core activity
of publishing is the act of printing
That's what costs money. Now, to
attain financial security, we have
to go back to why poetry isn't
selling. Look at how many people

walk in and out of bookstores in this country every single day
and come out with stacks and stacks of these commercial
products called "books." People buy them by the tons. That
tells me there's a tremendous opportunity there. All we have
to do is improve the quality of poetry and the poetry delivery
system. If we do that, there's tremendous opportunity for
growth. The poetry delivery system is all screwed up because
people are used to getting the stuff from these traditional
presses and they're turned off by it because it doesn't affect
them at all and it doesn't speak to them at all. It has nothing
to do with what goes on in their lives, has nothing to do with
their fantasies and it doesn't make them laugh or cry. That's
what we have to do: make it matter. If you make it matter,
people will be receptive and sales will go up through the roof
and as a publisher you'll attain financial security. Forty years
ago, nobody could have predicted that in the seventies and
eighties, there were going to be five, six, seven comedy clubs
in every city down to Broken Arrow, Oklahoma. It's totally
unprecedented. Nobody thought it could ever happen.

Emigre You're quite an optimist.

O Ne There's no reason not to be

Emigre On the subject of intellectual property, I'd like to present
you with a little scenario and get your reaction. Let's say you
became quite successful at what you're doing with
Juggernaut and you publish the work of another writer. You
invest in publishing his or her book and perhaps invest in
various promotions to announce the book to the public. At this
time, you as a publisher are helping the career of this writer.
Through the distribution system you have built, the contacts
you have developed over time, and the money that you've
earned, you now enable that other writer to benefit from
your labor and investments. However, at this point you are
pretty much in the red. You paid for the printing, editing,
promotions, you paid for shipping the books to distributors,
and you need to recoup that investment.

Now, let's say this book becomes quite a hit and the writer
gets all sorts of invitations from other publishers and
magazines. According to your manifesto, the writer should
retain ownership over the work and therefore can take the
same book that Juggernaut published, or any new work, to a
major publisher and become a huge star. This was made
possible to a large extent by your grass roots efforts. The
point I'm making here is that the methods that large
publishers use, the "work for hire" and "intellectual
ownership" that you argue against in your abstract, might be
the only method to get anything significant accomplished.
It's perhaps the only method by which you can truly develop
and help an artist along

O Ne When that happens, all I can say is "Pay me and leave."
That big publisher can't reprint our book because we designed
it, we made it look the Juggernaut way. They can take the
writing and do it in their schlock way any day they want to.

Emigre You're putting a big chunk of faith in the design. That big

publisher could say, "We're not going to put any
effort in the design; that costs too much money
and it's really quite unimportant. Let's put it
out very cheaply and print a million copies and,
instead, we'll invest the money in promoting
the book and letting people know it exists and
make it easily available."

O Ne I'd say, "Give me my cut" and invite me to
the signing party and I'd kiss the writer on the
cheek. It's a commercial world out there. If
that writer feels somebody else can do a better
job for him or her as a publisher, then indeed
that person owns those words. I happen to have
a stake in it. A stake that is very well defined in
a contract.

Emigre Do you see Juggernaut as operating
significantly differently from a large publishing
house?

O Ne Yes. For one, large publishers endeavor to
keep the writers and designers as far away from
each other as possible. They take the work and
say, "Goodbye writer, see you later." At
Juggernaut, the writer and the designer
communicate with each other until the work is
sent to the printer.

Emigre Since you have such high hopes for poetry to
take up a more prominent place within society,
wouldn't you stand a much bigger chance to get
your message out to the world with the help of
a large, multi-national operation? Wouldn't
that also be a much bigger challenge? Although
there's a certain romanticism attached to the
idea of working in the margins, it can also be
exploded as escapist. If you really want to
change the world, or at least change the inner
workings of large corporations in regard to
publishing poetry, wouldn't it be more effective
to do that from the inside?

O Ne Sure. I'm not opposed to working for a major
publisher. If a major publisher wants to have
the same kind of relationship that major record
companies have with independent labels, I'm
for that. You want to infuse capitol and let me
do whatever I want, and whatever product I
deliver to you you market, that's fine, let's do
it. Don't get me wrong, I'm not Mr. Anti-Big
Business. I want to be a big business. I want
publishers to shake in their boots and run. I
think I can do it better. I know I'm delivering
poetry better than they are. And I'm delivering
it to their clients like Barnes & Nobles, Tower,
Borders. We have a system here and the system
will work on any scale because we have always
planned to be as big as possible. The poet is at
the center, not to be relegated to the fringe of
society.

Emigre Being alternative never seems to jibe with
making money, yet it's obvious that the entire
history of subcultures is a history of
entrepreneurs.

O Ne I often get flack for promoting myself so
aggressively. What's so wrong with promoting
yourself? America is about self-promotion. Is
there something wrong with publishing a book

Back at the motel now,
and he lays his badge on the table now,
a man free to show his allegiance as modern
roaming sheriff of copyright,
looking for that

**lateral promotion move to the Treasury Department, where I could
really do my stuff and turn my corners like I wanted to.**

yourself? Am I supposed to be sitting in a corner
throwing up on myself? I've got some real live
literary products and I want everyone to buy
them

Emigre When you start making money and start
promoting yourself, it's often seen as selling
out. I like what Neil Young said in regard to this.
He said that to him, selling out meant making a
real good record and then selling them all out.

O Ne Right. And my quote is, "I promise never to
sell out. I promise to have enough product, in
stock, for everyone."

Emigre Obviously I enjoy discussing the commercial
side of what people do. On the other hand, it's
striking how commerce is dominating everything
around us. Look at the world of professional
sports; strikes over contracts, hold-outs,
skyrocketing salaries, franchises moving to
cities with the deepest pockets. Read Option
and Spin magazines and most always the
conversation with musicians turns to record
deals, lawsuits, selling out, etc. Is that a sad
development?

O Ne People should be able to talk freely about it
when it's time to talk about it. But let's talk
about it with lawyers. Then there's a time and
place for it. In the entertainment, I don't think
we should talk too much about that. Let's have
a little bit of artifice. Let's just go out and give
them the show. You've got a contract on the
books, it's pending all the time. That's what so
cool about it. But I don't think it's sad because
usually when there's conflict, it means that the
talent figure is asking for more pay. Everything
in the entertainment industry is based on the
talent, so the creative talent should get the
most money. That makes people nervous.

Emigre Has your current job as a paralegal
contributed in any way to your Juggernaut
venture other than providing you with a steady
income?

O Ne Tremendously. I work in a litigation
department at a major law firm. When a person
or a company gets involved in full-blown
litigation, each of the parties has to turn over
all the accounting books and correspondence and
internal memos and financial transactions and
all the guts of their business to the other
parties in the litigation. After analyzing,
qualifying, quantifying, indexing, and
organizing these types of documents, you get
to know what it takes to run a business.
Working in a law firm has also given me access
to nice people called lawyers who are willing to
give me legal advice about my ventures.

Emigre It's interesting how that seeps back into your
work. I just read your poem about the ASCAP
man.

O Ne I was reading all these copyright cases and I
was really into the minute distinctions upon
which courts have decided who owned what and
how much a particular original thought was
worth. The name "ASCAP" kept popping up of
course, and they never lose! They have guys

And he lays down his keys and his
entrance tokens and he
pulls out all the
receipts for the expense report feeling kind of
glazed from the stale tap beer from the long
tubes into the basement and he
turns from the mirror to the chair
I'll treat this one right;
won't think of the ex-wife when I
bang this one

and he whips out the Fifty in a grand way
turns from the mirror to the chair and takes off his
pants at the edge of the bed like a chore.

*American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers

Cherry Poem

Tempo Boy Dirt Bike King

On The Same Day

and

Lonely ASCAP* Investigator #354 Falls in Love Again

were all taken from Nemo To All Employees

a collection of poetry by Daniel K. O'Neil

Published by Juggernaut

P.O. Box 3824

Chicago, IL 60654-0824

who run around and sit in bars and wait for the jukebox to go on and voila!
Judgment in favor of ASCAP.

Emigre You recently sat in on a panel at the UNDERGROUND PRESS CONFERENCE in Chicago
at DePaul University. What were some of the discussions about?

O Ne It was all about the zine movement, which is a network of publishers,
reviewers and readers who buy and trade literature through the mail. I sat on
one panel about copyright versus anti-copyright. That was a lonely battle with
those phreaks. My position was that the copyright law of the United States of
America fosters the creation of new work. I'm completely in favor of copyright
protection. But I'm also completely in favor of sampling other people's work
and then folding it into a larger work and not paying for it.

Emigre Isn't that contradictory?

O Ne It's fuzzy, but it's not contradictory. We'll just have to develop it by people
suing each other. That's how the law moves forward. The whole thing is about
how much you take from an original work and how much damage you cause to
another person's market.

Emigre What was the prevailing attitude towards copyright?

O Ne An attitude of ill-informed naivete; all these people saying "Hey man, I'm
doing it for the love of blah, blah, blah..." I say copyright is the mechanism by
which underground people or independent people or people without the
resources can create a stable entity. There's only so much land in this world,
but you can wake up every single day and create brand new intellectual
property. That's beautiful. So why would you want to be anti-copyright when it
gives you the mechanism to do what you want to do? People think that it
stifles creation, but the thing is, a copyright does not prohibit other people
from copying your work. It prohibits them from doing so without your
permission. Most people don't see that distinction. These people would proudly
proclaim their zine was an "anti-copyright publication." They'd say "Just let us
know if you reprint it." The thing is, they're operating one hundred percent in
accordance with the guidelines of the copyright law. All they're doing is setting
forth the conditions under which someone can copy their work. That means they
have control over their work and that they're using the copyright laws to their
advantage. People fight and fight for nothing. Smashing Pumpkins got it right in
their new song Bullet with Butterfly Wings when they sang "despite all my
rage/I am still just a rat in a cage." No matter how alternative or
anti-copyright you think you are, you're still just a consumer of goods and
services. My life is based on filling up my part of the cage with some of the best
literary goods and services of the late 20th century, and they're all for sale.
There's no reason why I shouldn't be able to make a life out of that.

End

device, and the scope for typographic intervention to acts of denotation (transcription of letters, words, sentences) irrespective of the hermeneutic dimension opened up by the text (on this notion, see Ricoeur).

One consequence (and stake) of this challenge is the redefinition of text as a full semiotic object and the relation between typography and text as “motivated” in the linguistic sense of the term; i.e. as being in-formed by some of the characteristics/properties (content? strategy/ies? heuristic dimension?) of the text.

This is not to deny that there may be instances in which the heuristic role of typography will appear less prominent. Kinross lists these instances without hesitation. (I say “appear,” for under the surface operates a complex network of functionalities); however, even in these cases, I believe that the typographic functionality at work is more complex than the customary emphasis on optical ergonomics suggest. Even in those instances such as forms, notices, regulations, typography serves a number of semantic functions that exceed its denotative role (comparable to the first level of articulation described by Saussure), and are enmeshed in rhetoric and ideology. I gather, from personal conversations and from reading his valuable RHETORIC OF NEUTRALITY (*Design Issues*, 1989) article, that Kinross and I share this awareness; where our views and methodologies may differ, however, is in our interpretation of the notion of text from which we conduct our respective discourses about typography.

Kinross' view that the new typography “starts with the socialist revolutions of 1917–1919 in Russia and Central Europe,” that it was “fueled by a social project – very often a Socialist one,” “embodied a new formal vision of abstraction,” “in part a response to the new technologies of the early part of the twentieth century,” “had a utopian, universalizing vision,” “was anti-individualistic, and against the cult of the designer,” and, finally, that it was “practical and anti-academic” could, no doubt, be substantiated by historical facts (if they could be conjured up by typographic histories), but I only go so far with this argument and stop where Kinross sets out to encompass the “new typographies” into a unified set of concerns, which he traces back to an “origin” and to the “ideology” towards which his sympathies drive him; omitting and playing down, in the process, (as I pointed out in an article published earlier this year in *Visible Language*) other important strands, Futurism and Dada, which played an equally significant part in challenging dogmas and opening up the range of

typographic interventions onto texts. Dada and Futurism, however, could not be so easily fitted in Kinross's “agenda” as the international tradition of constructivism, which for him epitomizes modernism.

More seriously, I object and deeply deplore the amateurish use of linguistics combined with unsubstantiated references to deconstruction (carried out prematurely without first taking the trouble of reading Derrida's texts), which leads an otherwise distinguished scholar to obscure the already problematic relation between typography and deconstruction, to the effect of diffusing the debate before the problems have been adequately posed, all in the name of a generous concern for his “fellow readers.” Concerning my “appropriation” of the concept of “new typography,” I would like to point out that I do not use the expression “new typography” to refer to an essence, a homogeneous and unified body of work. In my mind “new typography” – which I often write “new typography/ies” – refers to a space of dispersion that encompasses a profusion of works that get conflated by commentators, (either in their wish to praise or to condemn them) without proper attention to details.

The problem I have identified is that neither its supporters nor its detractors have succeeded in theorizing what deconstruction might offer to typography. Instead of rejecting the term, as Catherine McCoy did at the recent Manchester conference *Typography: New Era. New Language*, I feel it would be more productive to read Derrida's works and see whether and how deconstruction might in-form typographic practices.

Making a hasty assumption about what might have brought him into the (distinguished, not “infamous”) company of Morison, Warde, Ruder and Rand, Kinross set out to demarcate himself from those he reminds us he has been critical of. My point with this list was not to illustrate some kind of neo-modernist conspiracy (infiltrated by Morison and Warde), but to identify inhibiting forces working from seemingly opposite ideological positions. In other words, to show that traditionalism – the institutionalized form of a once progressive or fertile ideology – is not the sole prerogative of neoclassicist or revivalist tendencies, but can emerge from any “ism” of art and design histories, once they become institutionalized. The five names stand as significant and varied exemplars – significant in their differences and in their shared opposition to change – whose work I respect and acknowledge for their respective contribution to the

typographic debate.

The word “alleged” in the opening page of my article may hurt; I do not doubt, for a moment, that Kinross is genuinely concerned about his “fellow readers.” I respect his concerns, but as with the bear in La Fontaine's fable, I do not think that throwing a brick into his master's face was the best way of going about chasing the fly.

Gérard Mermoz, Coventry, U.K.

Dear Emigre,

I read with great interest the essay by John Downer, THE ART OF FOUNDING TYPE on the poster advertising “Not Caslon.” Too often the critics of digital type design assume that the practitioners in the field are Neanderthals who have only recently discovered the computer, having leaped forward from walking on their knuckles to standing erect among other designers who have paid their dues in pre-computer days.

Unfortunately, there are bad designers and bad designers, whether they use computers or not. Tools don't make the man. I think it very wise of you to publish these kinds of essays, simply to get people to thinking about the history of what they are doing.

Cheers,

Bevan Davies, AOL

Dear Emigre,

Y'know, I thought I was done with you guys; but you have cheezed me off to a certain extent. Not because you insult me, my intelligence, or similar such stuff. You irk me because you exist in a world of the crass and the banal and want to make it the austere and effete. To consider yourself enlightened and tell an off-color joke is only human and mostly forgivable. We freely understand the inherent dichotomy in human nature, but to be a handmaiden to the whore and quote philosophy is the kind of presumption that makes us laugh when we watch a movie like *Pulp Fiction*. Your attempt to redefine American graphic design within the sphere of ephemeral French navel-gazing is a pointless exercise in bourgeois escapism. Indulging yourself in cliched pursuits of post-structuralism, post-dementia and other similar philosophies, is a negation of your own responsibilities and your own culpability. If you truly value the wisdom inherent in social self-examination and the connection of linguistics and self, why do you pursue second-hand semantic ecdysiasts like Barthes and Derrida and ignore a thinker of relevance and proximity like Noam Chomsky? Why? I think I know why. I think you don't want to deal with the here and now. It's much more comfortable to exist in a veil of circuitous, obtuse quotations than deal with the realities of what you

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Correction

In Emigre #35, in the article Ways of Looking Closer by Denise Gonzales Crisp, where Dooley quotes VanderLans, we should have credited the first half of that quote to April Greiman. Sorry April.

Rotterdam Netherlands

Dutch
Summer
Graphic
Design
Program

1996

Eastern Michigan University
July 8 to July 26,

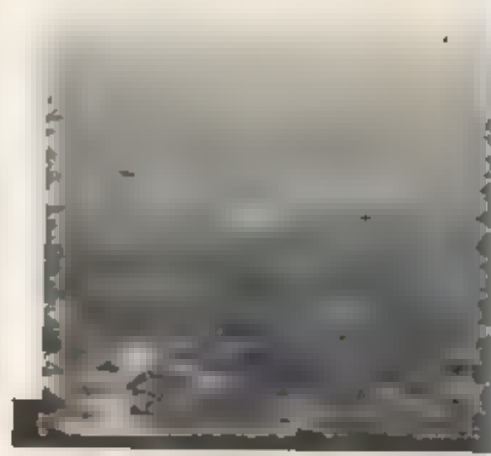
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device, and the scope for typographic intervention to acts of denotation (transcription of letters, words, sentences) irrespective of the hermeneutic dimension opened up by the text (on this notion, see Ricoeur)

One consequence (and stake) of this challenge is the redefinition of text as a full semiotic object and the relation between typography and text as "motivated" in the linguistic sense of the term, i.e. as being in-formed by some of the characteristics/properties (content? strategy/ies? heuristic dimension?) of the text

This is not to deny that there may be instances in which the heuristic role of typography will appear less prominent. Kinross lists these instances without hesitation. (I say "appear," for under the surface operates a complex network of functionalities); however, even in these cases, I believe that the typographic functionality at work is more complex than the customary emphasis on optical ergonomics suggest. Even in those instances such as forms, notices, regulations, typography serves a number of semantic functions that exceed its denotative role (comparable to the first level of articulation described by Saussure), and are enmeshed in rhetoric and ideology. I gather, from personal conversations and from reading his valuable *RHETORIC OF NEUTRALITY* (Design Issues, 1989) article, that Kinross and I share this awareness; where our views and methodologies may differ, however, is in our interpretation of the notion of text from which we conduct our respective discourses about typography

Kinross' view that the new typography "starts with the socialist revolutions of 1917-1919 in Russia and Central Europe," that it was "fueled by a social project - very often a socialist one," "embodied a new formal vision of abstraction," "in part a response to the new technologies of the early part of the twentieth century," "had a utopian, universalizing vision," "was anti-individualistic, and against the cult of the designer," and, finally, that it was "practical and anti-academic" could, no doubt, be substantiated by historical facts (if they could be conjured up by typographic histories), but I only go so far with this argument and stop where Kinross sets out to encompass the "new typographies" into a unified set of concerns, which he traces back to an "origin" and to the "ideology" towards which his sympathies drive him; omitting and playing down, in the process, (as I pointed out in an article published earlier this year in *Visible Language*) other important strands, Futurism and Dada, which played an equally significant part in challenging dogmas and opening up the range of

typographic interventions onto texts. Dada and Futurism, however, could not be so easily fitted in Kinross's "agenda" as the international tradition of constructivism, which for him epitomizes modernism

More seriously, I object and deeply deplore the amateurish use of linguistics combined with unsubstantiated references to deconstruction (carried out prematurely without first taking the trouble of reading Derrida's texts), which leads on otherwise distinguished scholar to obscure the already problematic relation between typography and deconstruction, to the effect of diffusing the debate before the problems have been adequately posed, all in the name of a generous concern for his "fellow readers." Concerning my "appropriation" of the concept of "new typography," I would like to point out that I do not use the expression "new typography" to refer to an essence, a homogeneous and unified body of work. In my mind "new typography" - which I often write "new typography/ies" - refers to a space of dispersion that encompasses a profusion of works that get conflated by commentators, (either in their wish to praise or to condemn them) without proper attention to details

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There are few cultures that assign the same

level of importance to graphic design as the Netherlands. Historically, graphic designers in the Netherlands have been recognized for their experimental response to communication needs. In the early part of the twentieth century major movements central to concepts in modern design were forming. In one culture, the Netherlands, a continuous connection from modern's inception to present day practitioners is evident. Key figures in the early modern movement in the Netherlands such as Piet Zwart, Paul Schuitema, Dick Elffers and Gerrit Rietveld have a direct influence on contemporary practicing designers and commissioners. In the Netherlands clients, designers and society accept and encourage solutions that respond to communication needs with inventive twist distinct from those seen in other cultures. It becomes apparent that design is integrated into the fabric of every day society, obvious within the public environment.

The De Program will engage the participants in a cross-disciplinary dialogue analyzing, viewing, and discussing those cultural linkages that are the basis for attitudes that facilitate and inspire Dutch design and contemporary design in Europe. The forum will include thematically related studio projects, visitations, discussion sessions, presentations and seminars collectively structured to facilitate dialogue, connection and context. Visualization activities will take place using portable digital tools.

Students are responsible for airfare and ground transportation to and from Rotterdam, Netherlands. Candidates need to allow extra spending money for meals, art supplies, personal ground transportation and personal spending money.

The program is being developed over a three week period July 8 - 26, 1996. The program is based in Rotterdam and France with side trips to Paris, Amsterdam, Den Haag, Breda, Antwerp, and other select locations.

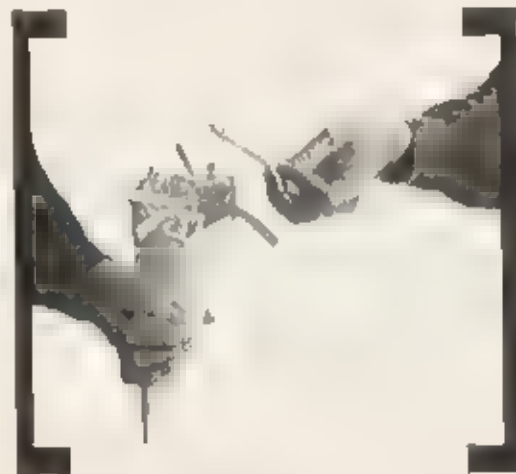
The program is open to professional designers, graduate students, educators, and select undergraduate candidates (upon portfolio review: 10 to 20 slides). Students are eligible for three graduate or undergraduate credits.

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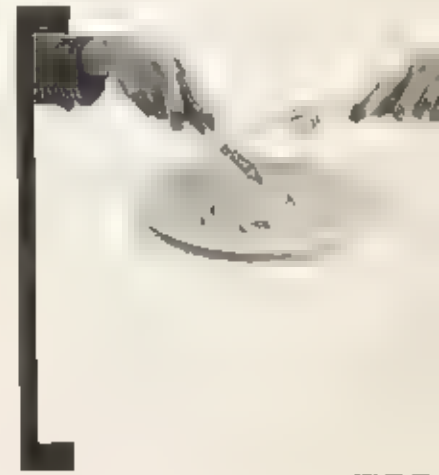
CONTACTS

Doug Kisor or Susan LaPorte
Eastern Michigan University
Communication Design Area
114 FordHall
Ypsilanti, MI 48197
313 487-3388
Fax 313 480-1927

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NOTHING
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Poem

**I am William
Shakespeare.
The rest of you
pretenders
better run.**

Daniel X. O'Neil